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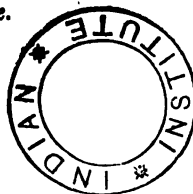
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**SOCIAL REFORM**  
**FOR THE**  
**N. W. PROVINCES.**

**PROCEEDINGS OF PUBLIC MEETINGS,  
WITH TWO PAPERS AND A PREFACE.**

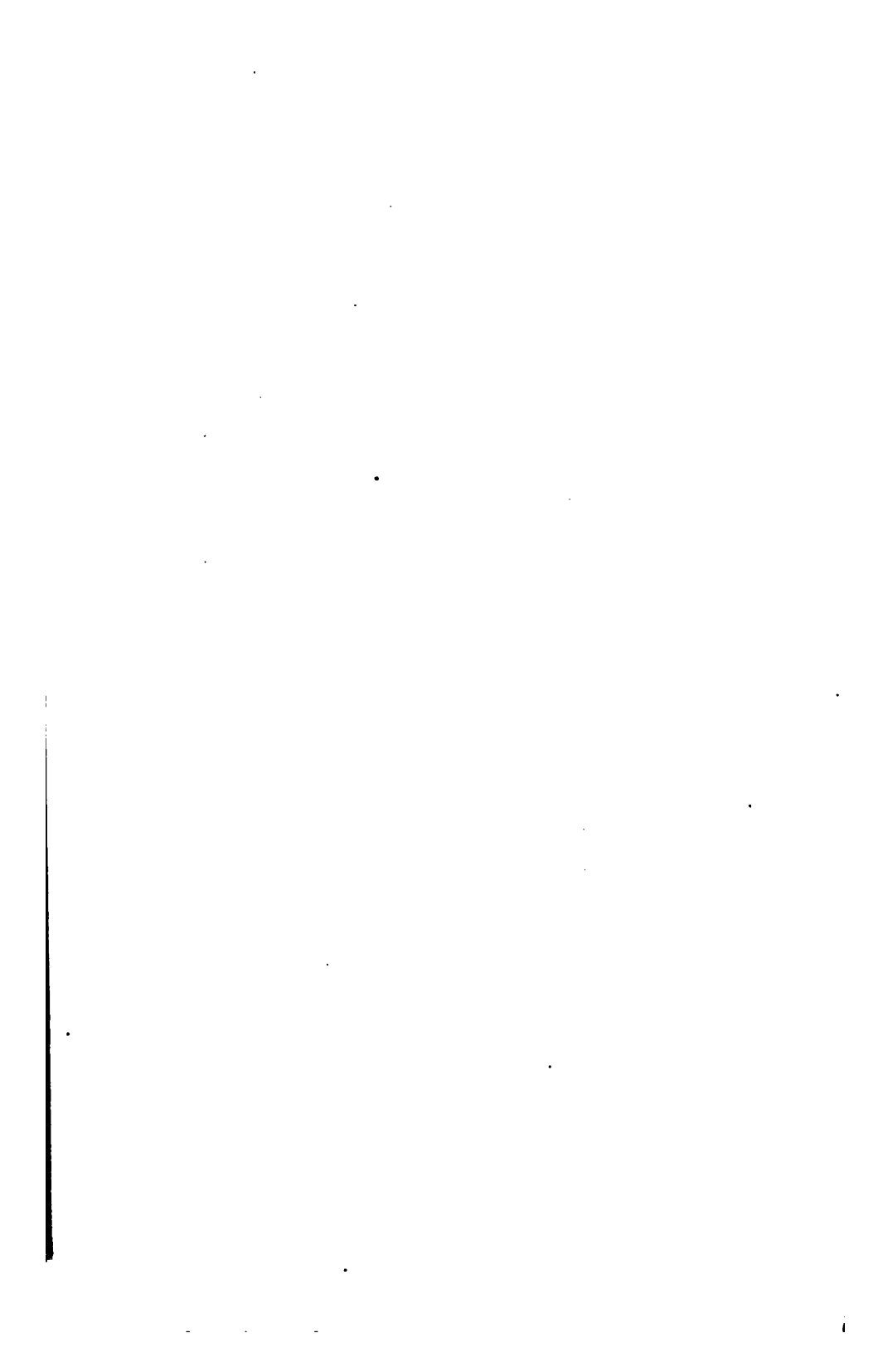
**BY**  
**LALA BAIJ NATH, B. A.,**

*Chief Justice of Indore.*



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## P R E F A C E.



MR. MALABARI'S late tour in the N. W. Provinces was one continued success. Wherever he went he carried the people with him. Educated and uneducated, orthodox and unorthodox alike, felt the force of his arguments. At Allahabad, Benaras and Mathura, the citadels of Hindu orthodoxy, his reception was enthusiastic; and the Shastris, Pandits and Gosains, who are seldom alive to the force of reason in these matters, listened to the national reformer and agreed with him as to the main lines of reform. The cause was good, public opinion was quite ripe for a change, and it only needed a man of earnest purpose and strong will to lead it into the proper channel. The questions taken up by Mr. Malabari are not new. They have been under discussion for the last 50 years. But in most cases the discussion was neither universal nor did it pass beyond the stage of the club or the lecture room debate. Caste, disinclination to incur public odium, want of moral courage—these and many other causes must account for the indifference which hitherto characterized educated Hindus in approaching the questions. It was reserved for a Parsi to take the lead, facing ridicule and unfounded aspersions from those he tried to benefit. There is nothing strange in this. Every cause has its martyrs. Sankracharya, Nanak, Budha, Chaitanya did not succeed in their respective causes without hard-fought struggles. Slavery had its Clarkson and Wilberforce. Why not let Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood have its Malabari and Rughu Nath Rao? The cause, as the latter says, depends upon justice, upon the Hindu Shastras, upon civilization, upon commonsense; and with such strong forces to support it, it is not surprising if those who are opposed to the reforms found abuse with argument.

In our own community the opposition divides itself into those who defend infant marriages, and those who, whilst not defending such marriages, still persist in leaving the remedy to time, education, and private effort. The former class includes but few men of education, and these few defend the practice less upon its intrinsic merits than from opposition for the sake of opposition, or from want of moral courage to incur the displeasure of their families or castes. The usual argument in favour of infant marriage is that it prevents immorality and is the outcome of the joint family and mutual dependence system which characterizes Hindu society. But no institution, however objectionable, is without some good, and in all cases of the kind the question is whether it causes more harm than good. We make bold to say that early marriages come within the latter category. For one youth whom early marriage keeps away from immorality, there are hundreds of young gallants who look upon their wives as useless after 20 or 25 and lead a life of immorality—hundreds of young women who are left widows because of their boy-husbands dying of small-pox or other diseases peculiar to children. On the other hand, for one happy joint family there are hundreds where the earnings of the head fall far short of the number of mouths to be fed, and the system of mutual dependence shows itself at its worst.

The other party consists of those who are anxious to have the present discussion end in something practical, more than words; and this class includes representative men, both amongst Europeans and Natives. One of the chief contentions of the former party is, that not being a Hindu, Mr. Malabari could not be expected to know the inner workings of their society. But in the first place, the fact that many Hindus of light and leading, most of them representative men of their respective communities,

have not only expressed their concurrence with his views, but promised to take active steps on the lines suggested by him, shows that it was not a stranger who was setting himself up as their guide. In the second place, born and bred in the midst of Hindu society, the interpreter of Wordsworth the Poet and of Max Müller the Savant could not be so ignorant of gross evils floating upon its surface, as people represent him to be. Already known, in and out of India, as the most influential Indian journalist, it could not have been love of notoriety that prompted this Parsi gentleman to sacrifice his time, energy, and money, only to be rewarded with abuse from some of those he was working for. On the contrary, it must be a man of strong individuality who could risk so much for the realization of an idea, and such a man is not likely to rest until his idea is accomplished. The Englishman instinctively loves individuality. This is the reason why all the highest officials in India and some of the leading thinkers in England have sympathized with Mr. Malabari. It argues something more than mere selfishness to have secured the sympathy and co-operation of men like Mr. Gladstone, the Marquis of Ripon, Lord Dufferin, Mr. Ilbert, Sir Auckland Colvin, Sir Alfred Lyall, Sir Lepel Griffin, Mr. Hume, Messrs. Melvill, West, Scott and many others. If Lord Ripon or Sir Alfred Lyall expressed cordial sympathy with, and promised warm support of, what tended towards the amelioration of the condition of women in India, they only represented the feeling of every other Englishman. Being a foreign agency, the Government of India are naturally cautious in dealing with what appears to them to be intimately associated with the religion of the Hindus. But their Resolution does not do away with the necessity of earnest and persistent efforts in the direction of social reform. On the contrary, now is the

greater necessity for the anti-legislation party to prove by deeds that Mr. Malabari was not justified in invoking the aid of the legislature for what could be better accomplished by private effort. Otherwise, it would only be giving other people a handle to charge the educated Natives with being utterly wanting in the power of self-help. At all events, the Parsi reformer's advocacy has done the cause of social reform a world of good, and Mr. Hume was right when he wrote to him as follows:—

That two of the most complicated and controverted problems of social reform, which for at least a quarter of a century have engaged in a desultory fashion the minds of the public, should thus in 3 short years have been cleared of all misconceptions and misrepresentations and reduced to their simplest elements, is a great work and one for which the country will, hereafter, I feel sure, be adequately grateful to you.

The Resolution of the Government of India, so wise and so sympathetic—focussing as it were the subject and bringing it within the sphere of practical politics—is another great step that India owes almost entirely to your noble and unselfish labours, and one which you may well be proud of having brought about. I doubt whether there are ten other men in India who could have accomplished so much in so short a time.

You may not have accomplished all you desired ; perhaps you desired more than the country is ripe for ; but you have succeeded in so forcing these questions on public attention that our people can never again slumber over them, but *must*, each community in that fashion that most commends itself to them, perforce proceed to place these matters on a healthier footing.

Now is the duty of all true well-wishers of the country to act yet more energetically in this cause. If it is Parsi leadership that is objected to, let a Hindu come forward as leader, and Mr. Malabari will be the last to object to having the work taken off his hands. Our object here is not to give undue praise to Mr. Malabari, but to show that his opponents have quite misjudged their man, and that if they had but seconded, instead of thwarting, his efforts, the cause of social reform would have prospered more. The papers to which this note is appended

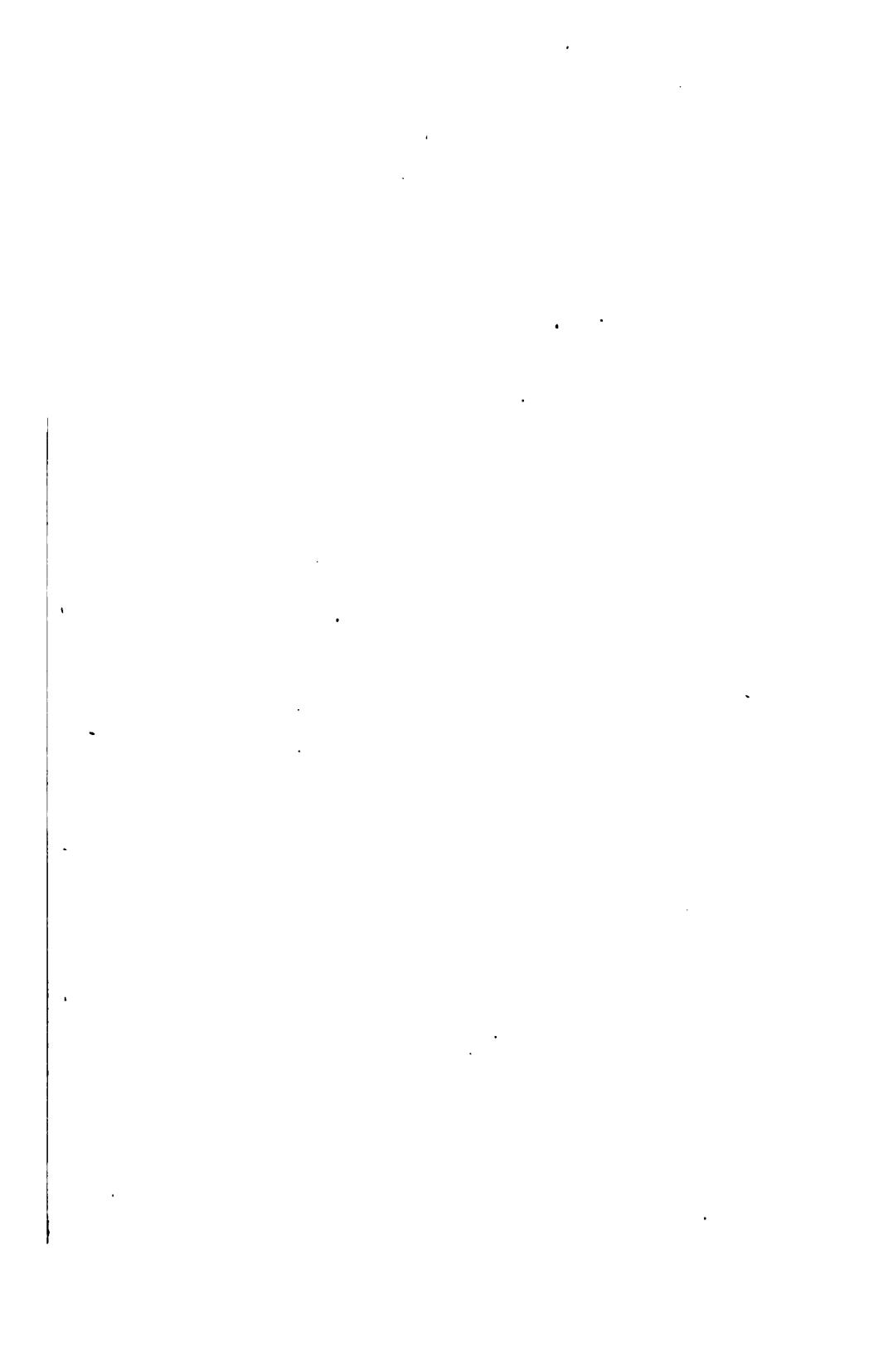


are intended to show how reforms in matters social could be safely effected in the North West Provinces. There is, we believe, quite a consensus of opinion in our parts on the necessity of having some legislation in the matter of early marriages, and those competent to form an opinion think that the ordinary machinery at the disposal of the State ought to be quite sufficient to deal with any cases that are likely to arise. At all events this would be a question for our new local Legislature to decide, were the leaders of the Hindu community to move it for this purpose. In the matter of widow marriages it would be necessary to educate public opinion as to the necessity of reform before any combined action involving legislative aid in the directions indicated by the Government of India, or any extended use of the already existing law, was possible. Neither of these papers lays any claim to originality or erudition. They are the result of every day experience, and if they stimulate our reformers to more energetic action in the direction of reform our labours will be amply repaid.

*We cannot conclude without calling special attention to Mr. Malabari's speeches at Lucknow, Allahabad and Mathura. Never before were the evils of Infant Marriage brought home to the hearts and the minds of the people in so convincing a manner. And never were more judicious remedies suggested for the abatement of the evils. Unfortunately for the country, not only have his objects not been considered with care, but in many places they have been sadly misconstrued.*

BAIJ NATH.

*Indore, 2nd November, 1886.*



# SOCIAL REFORM IN THE N. W. PROVINCES.

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## AGRA.

A largely attended and most influential meeting of the Native community of Agra, probably the very largest that has been held in this town for a public purpose, was held in the Victoria College on Thursday, the 10th instant, to take active measures to put a stop to the practice of infant marriages. The *elite* of all sections of the Native community, Hindus and Mahomedans, were seen at this meeting. There were Native officials of all grades, from the highest to the lowest, almost all the Municipal Commissioners and Honorary Magistrates, the principal Native representatives of all the different castes, and a very large number of College students. In addition to this a number of European gentlemen and a lady were also present. Letters of sympathy were received from Mr. R. E. Hamblin, Joint Magistrate of Agra, and Thakur Umrao Singh, Rais of Agra district. Amongst others present were noticed Mr. W. Young, C. S., Judge of Agra, Mr. Thomason, Principal Agra College, Mr. Pargiter, Principal St. John's College, Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, Messrs Pogose and Martin, Messrs Parter, Mackintosh, Smith; Moulvi Fariduddin, Sub-judge, Babu Promodha Charan, Judge Small Cause Court, Choube Ram Das, Honorary Magistrate, Munshi Nand Kishore, Honorary Magistrate, Hakim Aulad Ali, Honorary Magistrate, Moulvi Fariduddin, Rais of Agra, Hakim Walait Husain, Municipal Commissioner, Master Amiruddin, Municipal Commissioner, Moulvi Hashmat Ullah, Pleader of the High Court, Munshi Tsaduq Husain, Rais of Ghatia, Sheikh Bisarati Ali, Seth Pitam Chand, Lala Harnarain, Rais, Lala Dwarka Das, Vakil, Lala Girdhar Lal, Vakil, Munshi Jagan Parshad, Vakil, Pandit Jagan Nath, Babu Perbhu Dial, Mir Qazim Husain, Mirza Mehomed Ali, Pundit Girraj Kishore, Babu Jamna Das Biswas, Babu Shankar Dial, B. A., Mir Mehomed Ali, Mr. Murli Dhar, Head Master Victoria College, Pundit Thakur Parshad, Lala Kanhai Lal, Lala Nihal Chand, Assistant Manager U. C. S. Bank, Babu Uma Charan

Banerjee, M. A., Secretary to His Highness the Maharaja of Dholpore, and others. Mr. W. Young, Judge of Agra, was voted to the chair. The Chairman, in introducing the guest of the evening, Mr. Behramji M. Malabari, expressed his very great pleasure at having this opportunity of publicly evincing his sympathy with a movement calculated to do immense good to India. Mr. Malabari was animated by a noble spirit, and he was possessed by a great idea which, when carried into practical effect, would result in not only social, but also political regeneration. The natives of this country, as was remarked by Sir Alfred Lyall the other day at the Agra College, though possessing much intelligence, were wanting in thoroughness and accuracy, and Mr. Young hoped that movements like this would supply that defect. He, the Chairman, had always taken great interest in these matters, and he felt certain that the seed sown to-day would result in a rich harvest of moral unity and social and political activity hitherto lying dormant.

Mr. Behramji M. Malabari then made a few touching remarks. He was glad to have this opportunity at last of redeeming a promise he had made to Lala Baij Nath, Munsiff of Agra, some time ago. That gentleman would be able to tell the meeting what was done at the National Congress at Bombay for the attainment of that unity of purpose to which the worthy Chairman had just referred. When two years ago he appealed for co-operation in putting a stop to the evils of Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood, he was advised to collect the opinions of representative men in the country. The result of this inquiry was more encouraging than he had hoped for, and now came the time for action to be taken by his Hindu brethren. Here he would confine his remark to Infant Marriage, because the other topic was likely to cause unnecessary irritation. He would ask the gentlemen present if Infant Marriage was not productive of infinitely more harm than good? What was the cause of the wholesale degeneracy that had come over modern India? Some said it was owing to material impoverishment; others ascribed it to neglect of religion, and others still to want of scientific knowledge. All these gentlemen were perhaps equally right. But Mr. Malabari thought that probably the most patent cause of this national decay had been lost sight of. He referred to want of moral perception. Now he must not be misunderstood to mean, as

some of his over-educated young friends had misunderstood him, that his countrymen were an immoral race. Very far from it. The Indians were as moral a people as any on God's earth. For instance as public men, our judges and doctors, and journalists and school-masters were as morally disposed as Europeans in the same lines of work. But let us accompany them home. What a deplorable difference between the two races! In domestic matters we natives had a very faint perception of the moral law. Mr. Malabari then contended that infant marriages were inconsistent with a sense of nationality, with true patriotism. What public spirit was visible amongst us was, no doubt, as indicative of the marvellous vitality of the nation as of the beneficent influence of the British rule. But on the whole, the season of youth, the most glorious period in the life of the individual as of the nation, was denied to the Indian under this custom of infant marriages. Consequently there was so little of enterprise in India as compared with other countries. Mr. Malabari concluded by appealing to his hearers most earnestly to discontinue the practice which had nothing to be said for it, and everything to be said against it. The speaker resumed his seat amidst loud cheers.

Lala Girdhar Lal, Pleader, moved the first Resolution :—"That this meeting is of opinion that the practice of Infant Marriage amongst all classes of the Native community, being prejudicial to our best interests, ought to be put a stop to by every available means." In moving this Resolution he said that though Infant Marriage was the cause of some sentimental gratification to parents in having child-husbands and child-wives, it seriously interfered with the education and progress in life of both, mentally and physically. He would not trace the history of the practice. But he would say that not only amongst Hindus, but amongst certain sections of the Mahomedan community also, this custom was prevalent. The evil was intensified, when, as in some castes, there was an exchange of girls which often involved the marriage of young girls to old men, and when, as in some poverty stricken families, such girls were married to old men either for money consideration or from a mistaken notion about the young girl being happy in a richer family. If, therefore, we were to fix the marriageable age of girls at 12 and of boys at 18, and have the *Gona*

or consummation of marriage 5 years later, the evil would be removed. Let the leaders of society set an example, and others would follow. Mr. Girdhar Lal concluded his address by referring to a case of an old man on the brink of the grave marrying a young girl; and litigation having cropped up in connection with an adoption made by the widow after his death, the speaker asked what must be the feelings of the young widow now?

Pundit Thakur Pershad, Head Pundit of the Agra College, in seconding the Resolution, observed that early marriage interfered with both physical and mental development, and was the cause of not only all that poverty and misery which so often characterised Native families, but of a vast number of Hindu widows whose boy-husbands died early. The practice was not sanctioned by the Shastras. He quoted Manu and the Vedas to prove that at the lowest calculation a boy's marriageable age was after 18 and a girl's 11 or 12. He pointed out that the verse in *Sheghra-bodha* as to a girl being a *Gowri* if married at 8, *Rohini* if married at 9, a maiden if married at 10, was most absurd and opposed to the Hindu shastras. If the guardian of a girl, who had attained the age of puberty in her father's family, went to hell because he had delayed the marriage, the Pundit asked whether the fathers of Rukamani, Krishna's wife, Sita, Rama's wife, Damayanti, Nala's wife, Drupadi, Pandu's wife, all of whom chose their husbands in *swayambara*, went to hell? The Shastras showed that the husband and wife were to make certain promises to each other, which, unless they were of age, could not be done, but which were now repeated by the officiating priests as so many formalities. In conclusion he made a stirring appeal to his hearers to take up the reform in their own families, and said if they did so others would be sure to follow.

Mirza Mohomed Ali, Pleader of the High Court, supported this Resolution. He advocated some legislative action, because the people here were so apathetic, and pointed out that not only was this not a religious matter, but that even in religious matters Government had, where its interference was thought to be conducive to the good of the subjects, interfered, for instance in the matters of Act XXI of 1850. But unless we informed the Government of what our own wishes and feelings were, they would not

undertake to legislate for us. For instance, the late ruling of the Courts in the matter of an unchaste widow retaining her husband's property was opposed to the views and feelings of all Hindus, and if we informed the Government of it we were sure to be heard. It would, however, be more conducive to success were private efforts to go hand in hand with a demand for legislation. Let such efforts be commenced from such places as Bombay; let us educate public opinion, do nothing suddenly, and keep working on patiently, and the practice would die out (Loud cheers.)

The Resolution was then put to the vote and carried unanimously. Lala Pirbhudial, Pleader, then moved the second Resolution: "that a committee consisting of the following gentlemen, with power to add to their number, be appointed to devise measures for carrying out the first Resolution."

In moving this Resolution he said that when Infant Marriage was proved to be an evil, we must set about removing it. Let us unite. It was wrong to say that the North Western Provinces were not prepared for the movement, though they may well follow the example of Calcutta and Bombay. But let us do all that we can by private effort, Heaven helps those who help themselves. Let us have representative men of each caste for the head committee, and work honestly, and we will succeed. Mr. Qazim Husain, Pleader, in seconding this Resolution, said let us have a real, instead of a nominal, working committee and he exhorted all present not to drop the matter, but to take it up earnestly. Pundit Girri Raj Kishore Dutt, in supporting the Resolution, said that it would not do to say that the custom of Infant Marriage was pernicious, but in order to root it out let us unite and take the examples of Associations and public bodies in other places. He then proposed the following names as members of a provisional committee :—

Mr. W. Young, President; Mr. H. B. Finlay, Vice-President; Babu Promada Charan Banerjee; Moulvi Fariduddin; Lala Baij Nath; Moulvi Mehomad Mohsan Khan Bahadur; Munshis Raja Lal; Sheo Narrain; Nand Kishore; Jagan Pershad; Girdhar Lal; Dwarka Das; Choube Ram Das. Mir Qazim Husain suggested the addition of :—Moulvi Fariduddin, Rais, Agra; Hakim Aulad Ali; Munshi Amir Uddin.

There was some discussion on the advisability of officials serving on the committee, and Master Murli Dhar pointed out that it would be better to have representatives of all castes on it rather than officials. But as it was pointed out that this was what this committee would have to do, the Resolution was passed with only three dissents. Moulvi Fariduddin, the Sub-judge, then moved the last Resolution, that the most cordial and sincere thanks of this meeting and of the Native community of Agra be accorded to Mr. Malabari for his initiative, zeal and sacrifice in the matter of social reform."

In moving this Resolution the Moulvi Sahib made a powerful speech. He said that he congratulated Mr. Malabari on this golden day in the history of Agra, simply to show that those who worked for the public good deserved public recognition. But he was sure that Mr. Malabari's best merit was that he was merely doing his duty. He advised that intrepid philanthropist to work on patiently, and his efforts would be crowned with success. Education must precede reform. The Moulvi alluded to the prejudice the Mahomedans had against English education in former days. He did not agree with Munshi Girdhar Lal in that Infant Marriage was common amongst Mahomedans, so far as he knew it was not. He then pointed to the regard which the Mahomedan religion enjoined for the rights of woman, and quoted texts to show that female liberty was not what it was now. He made a stirring appeal to all present to do their best for the Hindu community which was the mother of the Indian community, and to which they owed so much. He referred to the beneficent efforts made by the Countess of Dufferin towards the amelioration of the condition of Native women, and sat down after congratulating Mr. Young on the sympathy he had shown for the Natives. Pandit Jagan Nath, in a short speech, seconded the Resolution and dwelt upon the zeal and self-sacrifice of Mr. Behramji Malabari, and said that their best and sincerest thanks were due to him for his efforts.

Lala Baij Nath, Munsiff of Agra, in supporting the Resolution said that men of Mr. Malabari's stamp were rare; that unless every province, town and village of India had a Malabari of its own, India's condition would not be ameliorated. It was a matter of regret that whilst Bengal had its Vidya Sagar, Madras its Raghunath Rao, and Bombay its Malabari, the N. W. P. had none to take his seat



with these men; and that whilst Hindus did not move in what most vitally affected them, it was reserved for a Parsi to do so. But it must not be supposed that Mr. Malabari was in any way a stranger to us. He was more a Hindu than we were. Let us, therefore, make the most of this opportunity. Let it not be said of us:

*“Agar ek jawan mard hamdard Insan  
Kare Quom per dil se jan apni qurban,  
Jo khud qaom uspe lagawe yeh bohtan  
Ki uski koi gharaz ismen hai pinhan  
Wagar na pari kya kisi ko kisi ki  
Yeh chalen sarasar hain khud matlabiki.”*

“Were a patriot and philanthropist to sacrifice his life for the good of his nation, the latter would charge him with some selfish object, asking—why should a man care for others? He must have some object in view.” Let it not be said of us that we were ungrateful to those who sacrificed so much for us, and in this spirit the speaker would call for a hearty vote of thanks for Mr. Malabari. This Resolution was carried by acclamation.

Lala Baij Nath then proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. W. Young for his having presided on the occasion. He said that Mr. Young's sympathy for Natives was always known. He was not one of those who looked upon India as a land to go and make money in as short a time as possible and have nothing to do with Natives. On the contrary, he believed that Mr. Young was one of those men who did much for India, men like Lord Ripon, Sir W. Muir, Mr. Hume, Sir W. Wedderburn, and others. This was also carried by acclamation. Three cheers were then called for by Lala Baij Nath for Her Majesty the Queen, and three for the Countess of Dufferin for what they had done for Indian women. The meeting then dispersed. Mr. Malabari was loudly cheered as he left the rooms, the students shouting “Long live Malabari, God bless Malabari.” He was then besieged in the street and requested by Seth Pitam Mul, the well known Banker, and others, to attend a party to be given in his honour. But he begged to be excused, as he was to leave Agra almost immediately. He, however, agreed to attend on his return to the town if something practical was done in the meantime towards the object of his visit.

## ALIGARH.

A public meeting of the Hindu inhabitants of Aligarh, of all sections of the community, was held at the Society's Rooms on the 14th instant to hear Mr. Malabari upon the question of Infant Marriage in India and to devise practical methods of co-operation with him. Raja Jaikisen Dass Bahadur, C. S. I., was voted to the Chair. The Raja Bahadur opened proceedings by introducing Mr. Malabari in a brief, but highly appreciative speech. He observed that there was no need of introducing to the public of Aligarh or of any part of India a gentleman who had been travelling all over the continent, like a messenger from God, intent upon redeeming the whole nation. Mr. Malabari, added the Raja, had been spending his strength and his substance on freeing the Hindu race from the tyranny of an evil custom, and the least that the suffering community should do was to aid his noble efforts practically. Mr. Malabari had been flying across thousands of miles for earnest and intelligent co-operation. The Raja felt sure that the Hindus of Aligarh would give him such support, together with their most grateful thanks. With these remarks Raja Jaikisen Dass left his honoured friend to explain himself. Mr. Malabari then addressed the meeting in the following manner :—

Mr. Chairman, Pandits, Reises and gentleman of Aligarh—As I told you last night, I have come here not to speak, but to listen, not to dictate my own terms to you, but to submit to your dictation. I have given you such time as I could spare to consider the matter. Is Infant Marriage an evil? You have assured me unanimously, and unanimously you are assuring me even now, that it is an evil, that it is at the root of many evils, and that it should be put a stop to. Now, gentlemen, this admission is a great gain to the cause. I will, therefore, dismiss this point after telling you what you scarcely need being told—that premature marriages have been the ruin of the race, physically, intellectually and spiritually—that they are making us less and less fit every day for the duties of modern life. As individuals and as a nation we have lost almost everything worth having under the operation of this custom. We have suffered in public spirit under a series of domestic afflictions entailed by the practice; we have become strangers to pluck and enterprise of most kinds, in a word we have very nearly lost the power of action, cer-

tainly of self-action. How, otherwise, could we account for our present position? We have had to make room for stronger and more united nations from abroad. Thus, masters have become servants, and great thinkers have become small, very small speculators. Look at our Mahomedan brethren. There was a time, and not so long ago, when I thought that the Hindus were far ahead of the Mahomedans. I have had to change my opinion since. And never before was I so confirmed in my opinion as yesterday when I sat for one hour by the side of that veteran educationalist and intrepid reformer, Sayad Ahmed Khan, listening to the speeches of some of the young Mahomedans returned from England, in whose honour was organized that enthusiastic demonstration. When will you Hindus go in numbers to Europe and America, to bring over to the old world the sciences and arts of modern civilization? When will you go to China, to Australia, to the trade coasts of Africa and elsewhere, for purposes of colonization or commerce? I repeat the Mahomedans are leaving you behind on the highways of life, so to say. Why?—because they are generally free from those social trammels under which you have been groaning for centuries. Far be it from me to exalt one nation at the expense of another. I am bound to the Hindus by ties of lifelong gratitude. To the Mahomedans I am bound by equally strong ties—those of close personal association. But after all, India belongs to the Hindus. The Hindu community is the mother of all the Indian communities. And it has often occurred to me, gentlemen, that if the different nationalities are to rise, they can do so best with the rise of the mother nation. You may call this a theory, a mere whim—with me it has been a deep-rooted principle. Rightly or wrongly I have always worked, and worked all along the line, upon this principle.

But I must not prolong this digression. You say you are prepared to discourage the practice of infant marriages, but are powerless to do so. I fully appreciate what our friend, Dr. Mulraj, said last night in the bitterness of despair — “we profess to do everything, but can do nothing.” The same evening a venerable Pandit assured me in the presence of Raja Jaikisen Dass and others that practical reform in the matter is impossible without *rajaya saheta* in some form — that is without the moral support of the State. This has been the experience of the strongest and most earnest

Hindu workers. But on that point, which has now become the *crux* of the whole question, I can offer no opinion of my own beyond this — that there is urgent and vital necessity for action. That infant marriages are not only *not* sanctioned by our *shastras*, but are actually interdicted by them, and that all that we have to do, now that we recognize the evil, is to follow the teachings of our *shastras* more faithfully. Let me appeal to you, my brethren of Aligarh, to be true to yourselves, to your instincts, to your best reason. I ask you to be true Aryas. As such, last night many of you told me that the minimum marriageable age for our girls should be fixed at 14. There were some amongst you, including two learned Pandits, who were for 16. There were four or five of you, however, who thought 12 might do to begin with. Well, my friends, I am content with the lowest minimum. Give it me un-animously, and I'll be well content. I have not come here to appeal to your feelings. All that I ask you is to exercise your judgment. Exercise your judgment, dear friends, and may Heaven guide it to a righteous conclusion ! (Loud and prolonged cheers)

After a translation of Mr. Malabari's speech by Kumar Parmanand, and after a few questions from some of the gentlemen present, it was proposed by Pandit Meherchand and seconded by Pandit Bhairava Dutt — that "The custom of infant marriage is contrary to reason and to the present circumstances of the country and must be stopped by the different castes by every means possible, if need be, with the support of the Government." The proposition was formally submitted to the meeting in English and in Hindi, and was carried unanimously.

The second proposition ran thus :—"That the marriage of young girls with old men be strictly prohibited." This was proposed by Pandit Nathuram, who addressed the meeting in Hindi, quoting *shloka* after *shloka* in support of his views. Pandit Nathuram's eloquent address, full of learned citations, produced a great effect on the meeting. And he was loudly and repeatedly cheered as he spoke about the value of self-sacrifice with special reference to Mr. Malabari, whom he likened to one of the Rishis of old, and as he exhorted his audience to follow the example. The proposition was seconded by Babu Gour Ballabsahe and was carried unanimously.

The third proposition, moved by Kumar Luchmi Narayan and

seconded by Pandit Kaniah Lal, was carried by acclamation. It ran thus :—" That a working committee of different castes be formed on the spot to co-operate with Mr. Behramji M. Malabari. . . . to whom the Hindu community owes an immense debt of gratitude."

Here the Chairman again 'addressed the audience in earnest words, asking them to co-operate with Mr. Malabari not in word but in deed. The great work had been taken up, he explained, by one who was destined to carry it through; but the Hindus must come forward with zeal, if not with his own inexhaustible zeal, at least with that much of it as may show that they feel with him and are ready to act with him.

Babu Tota Ram, the leading Pleader, then delivered an impressive address in Hindustani. It was the best speech of the evening. Mr. Tota Ram said he had no wish to disturb the unanimity of action on such an important occasion, and so he had refrained from speaking till the work had been formally gone through. He could not help feeling very thankful to Mr. Malabari for his self-sacrificing devotion. It was a shame that not a fraction of that zeal was shown by his own countrymen. It was a shame, too, that we should be driven to invite the support of Government in such a matter. But what was to be done? Infant marriages had brought the nation to this pass. Mr. Malabari had referred to our lack of public spirit. Were we better off at home? No. Much worse. The domestic life of the people was more unhappy still. Mr. Tota Ram drew an affecting picture of that life and appealed to his countrymen to rouse themselves in time, and to be above the taunts of their opponents, which taunts were but too true. He still hoped that the necessity for State action might be averted, and resumed his seat amidst loud and prolonged cheers.

Amongst those present at the meeting were Raja Jaikisen Dass, Bahadur, C. S. I, Raja Har Narayan Singh, Raja Ram Pal Singh, Kumar Benarsi Dass, Kumar Luchmi Narayan, Kumar Parmanand, Thakore Luchmun Singh, Thakur Hanuman Singh, Thakur Ram Shankar, Thakur Gauri Shunkar, and many others, Pandits, Reises, Pleaders, &c., Raja Ghan Sham Singh, Rao Karan Singh, Thakur Gurudut Singh and Thakur Govind Singh Sahib, having also expressed themselves as active sympathizers.

## LUCKNOW.

The following notice was issued on the 10th instant by Raza Hussain Khan, President of the Rifa-i-Aum Association, Pandit Pran Nath, Secretary Jelsa Tehzib, and Babu Bhoban Mohan Roy, Secretary Ajudhia Brahmo Samaj :—

A public meeting of the inhabitants and residents of the City of Lucknow will be held at the Kaisar Bagh Baradari on Wednesday, the 17th instant, at 5 P. M., to welcome Mr. B. M. Malabari of Bombay, the illustrious promoter of social reforms in India, and to devise means for an organization here, having for its objects the abolition of infant marriages and the promotion of other important reforms urgently needed in the country."

A similar notice was also issued by Pandit Sri Kishen and Munshi Naval Kishor, two of the foremost citizens of Lucknow. As advertised, the meeting took place on the 17th instant. Dr. W. Duthoit, D.C.L., Judicial Commissioner, Oudh, was good enough to take the chair, and amongst those present were observed the following :—Rai Narayan Dass, the Rev. Mr. R. C. Bose, Sheik Raza Hussain, Shiek Anayat Ullah, Babu Rampal Chakarbatty, Munshi Naval Kishor, Pandit Shyam Narayan, Pandit Pran Nath, Mr. Ganga Prasad Varma, Mr. Avinash Chunder Ghose, Mr. Bepin Behari Bose, M.A., Pandit Sri Kissen and many others, Honorary Magistrates, Municipal Commissioners, Reises, Pleaders, graduates, and College students.

Dr. Duthoit being indisposed, Rai Narayan Dass was called upon to commence the proceedings. He did so in a brief speech, referring to Mr. Malabari's work in the highest terms and requesting the audience to give him every possible attention. The Rai at the same time hoped that Government interference might be averted in such a matter, and trusted to the good sense and public spirit of the inhabitants of Lucknow. As to the urgent necessity of reform in our marriage practices the speaker thought there could be no two opinions.

Mr. Malabari then spoke as follows :—

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of Lucknow—I have come to you for a little business, as you are aware. And as I come for it all

the way from Bombay, I think you will give me credit for expecting that the business will be done. It is more your own business, gentlemen, than mine. I look upon myself only as a humble instrument in the hands of Providence for a cause the success of which is, in my judgment, an absolute and a vital necessity. I stand before you as a mere interpreter of the wisdom of ancient India as appreciated by the most thoughtful of our countrymen in the present day. The object of my mission is nothing new, nothing strange. Infant Marriage has been generally recognized as an unmitigated evil. It weakens our physical capacity and interferes sadly with our intellectual and spiritual development. It has almost destroyed our powers of cohesion and organization. You also know, gentlemen, that Infant Marriage is nowhere sanctioned in our, *shastras* nor can it be approved by commonsense amongst any community of men. Infant Marriage is more of a fashion than anything else. How is it, then, that knowing it to be an unmixed evil, at any rate as vastly more harmful than beneficial to the race, we have not yet been able to shake it off? Surely, we are not such a nation of suicides. We have tried, we are still trying, to get rid of the evil. Efforts have been made since the time of Akbar to put down Infant Marriage and its attendant evils. Those early efforts, more or less spasmodic, had not the slightest effect on society. Under the present rule, with its marvellous capacity to evolve order and system, more serious and more strenuous efforts have been put forth now nearly for a century. But the custom is just where it was before the British came to India, in some parts of the country more aggravated and intensified. The thing has grown up a fashion, as I told you. Individuals have failed to cope with it; it has defied corporate action itself. What appeared to be success at times has been swamped by the tide of reaction. There can be no stability in spasmodic efforts; they often end in discredit to the cause and disaster to its advocates. The fact is we have never been able to help ourselves effectively in the matter. The wisest and the strongest amongst us, Brahmins like Ragoonath Row and Ranade, for instance, Brahmins like Vidasagar and Madava Rao, have had, after prolonged struggles, to appeal for extraneous aid—to be saved from themselves. But not a few of the present generation seem to be disinclined to profit by the experience of their predecessors. They think, and rightly, that

they are not bound to abide by the decision of others in such a matter. They will try the thing for themselves. Now, I cannot help admiring this spirit. So long as this self-respecting zeal remains among our youth, so long may we hope for better things.

But let us see, gentlemen, what are the weapons with which we propose fighting the custom which has laughed at the efforts of intellectual giants? Remember, my friends, that men who could build up a new Church for India have practically failed to demolish this custom. Well, education, you say, should be our main support. Nothing could be stronger or a more legitimate support to lean upon. But what is the state of education in the country? Is there anything like a reasonable, an appreciable similarity between the educational acquirements of our boys and girls? See how unequal is the standard. That standard will never be the same, I believe; nor is such equality or identity at all desirable. But surely we must have *some* intellectual sympathy between the sexes for the reconstruction of the domestic fabric in the manner proposed by advocates of education as the only remedy for the evil. Speaking as a practical man I find male education itself more as retarding than facilitating social contentment. For whereas, if both sexes were to remain in ignorance, there would be some chance of their pulling together happily in life, the chances become smaller as one of the sexes keeps advancing rapidly and the other generally lagging behind. I do not, of course, imply that the education of our young men should be suspended till female education has been brought up to something like the same level. No; that would be foolish and mischievous. My only object in putting the matter thus before you is to demonstrate what is to my mind a serious difficulty in the way of timely reform. For this purpose it will never do, I contend, to trust entirely or even mainly to a spread of education in the country.

We are then asked to look upon Female Education as a specific. Female Education is undoubtedly one of the best remedies at hand. But as I'll presently show, it is by no means a panacea. For instance, what is the state of Female Education, so called, in your own provinces? I am not quite sure, but scarcely 1 girl, out of 200 girls of school-going age, actually goes to school. What do you think of that, my friends? And listen—if we take the total female popula-



tion of the North Western Provinces into account, scarcely 1 female out of 500 know reading and writing. Further, if we confine ourselves to the total Hindu population only (there are the Europeans, Eurasians, Mahomedans, Brahmos, &c.,) the proportion could not possibly be better than 1 to 800. Gentlemen of Lucknow, do you intend trusting for ever to this wonderfully well-spread Female Education as your only hope? (No, No) And let me ask you again, is it not idle to talk of "Female Education" when girls have to be withdrawn from school before 10-11? (A long pause) My friends, Female Education is at best an idea; Infant Marriage is a hard cruel fact. (Applause). The idea of Female Education is radically inconsistent with the practice of Infant Marriage. (Loud applause). It is all very well for European friends to lay so much stress on Female Education. You know better, you are *bound* to act more sensibly (Cheers). Do not, I beg, mistake the end for the means. (Loud cheers).

I hope, gentlemen, I have succeeded to some extent in laying bare the idols of clay that have been perhaps too long worshipped by some of our sentimental reformers. Let me warn you against this amiable creed, which teaches you to trust to some dimly discernible force that has to be generated by some other more dimly discernible self-created cause, in the remote future, when you and I and the sentimental philanthropists will have gone to our rest and to our account, shirking what appears to me to be an obvious duty for each one of us individually. Go into committee this very evening and try to find out practical remedies. Make some *bandobast* amongst yourselves to work out the problem honestly. Otherwise, you have a poor look out, my friends. I cannot venture to say exactly what your future will be under this grievous system of baby marriages. I am speaking to you under great restraint, imposed by my unfortunate position and by friends for whom I cannot but feel a real respect. I wish I were a Hindu—then I could have spoken to you more freely. But this at least I must say in conclusion, that if you continue much longer to be the slaves of Infant Marriage, you will cease to be men, you will cease to be a nation, you will cease to be Aryas worthy the name (Cheers.)

It was now proposed by Rai Narayan Dass Bahadur and seconded by Pandit Sri Kishen that :—"this meeting accords a cordial wel-

come to Mr. B. M. Malabari to Lucknow and records its sense of high appreciation of his noble, disinterested and patriotic exertions in the cause of social reform in India." Both proposer and seconder spoke warmly to the Resolution, which was carried by acclamation.

The second Resolution was proposed by Pandit Pran Nath, seconded by Munshi Naval Kishor and supported by Sheik Raiza Hussain. It ran thus:—"that this meeting is strongly of opinion that the custom of Infant Marriage is a curse to India and is productive of manifold evils to society, and that immediate steps should be taken by all right thinking men in Oudh for its abolition, with such moral support of the State as they deem necessary, and the meeting is further of opinion that unequal marriages in point of age should be equally discouraged." Pandit Pran Nath and Munshi Naval Kishor spoke at some length in favour of this Resolution, which was carried unanimously.

The third Resolution, for the formation of a strong committee from amongst the different Associations in Oudh, was proposed by Babu Bepin Behari Bose, M. A., and seconded by Pandit Shyam Narayan. The veteran Pandit addressed himself to the Resolution in a vehement speech, denouncing infant marriages from several points of view. No one cared for Government interference, he said; but there were many ways in which the Government could help the suffering community in its own interest as also in the interest of the Government itself. The Pandit spoke from personal experience, which was that young men of the age were in a miserable way physically and otherwise. Was not such a Government as ours, which did so much for us in every direction, bound in honour to come to our rescue? Mr. Shyam Narayan was loudly and repeatedly cheered in the course of his address in Hindustani.

A vote of thanks was than proposed for Dr. Duthoit by Munshi Ganga Pershad Varma, Editor and Proprietor of the *Hindustani*, after which the Chairman made a few remarks. He observed that he had not intended to say anything that evening. As they knew, he was not well, and for any other object he would not have acceded to his friend Munshi Naval Kishor's request to preside. But having heard what had fallen from preceding speakers, especially from Mr. Malabari, he could not help saying a few words on this

important occasion. He hoped the Committee appointed that day would co-operate earnestly with that gentleman. Mr. Malabari had taken up perhaps the most important work for the country, and had been toiling at it for years with the purest and the highest and the best of motives (Loud cheers). It now behoved every Hindu gentleman to make the cause his own. The speaker thought that such reforms rested entirely with the Hindus and that he could not see that the Government was likely to come forward. As a Government it could do nothing in such matters. But there was one thing in regard to which Government might take action—it might raise the age of consent for consummation in favour of the girl. Dr. Duthoit expressed his deep sympathy with the movement.

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### B A R I E L L Y.

A public meeting of the principal Hindu inhabitants of Barielly was held on the 15th February to hear Mr. Malabari on the subject of Infant Marriage. The following gentlemen may be named amongst those present :—

Raja Madho Rao Venayek, Lala Tirbeni Saha, Lala, Kaniah Lal, Lala Bishen Lal, M. A., Munshi Ganga Pershad, Munshi Thakoor Pershad, Lala Baboo Ram, Lala Damodar Dass, Pandit Ram Narayan, Baboo Sanatan Chatterji, Baboo Pria Nath Banerji, Lala Pooran Pershad, Pandit Gungaram, Lala Durbari Mull, Munshi Mohan Singh, Lala Baij Nath, Munshi Ranjeet Singh, Lala Kalka Pershad, Munshi Nand Kishor, Baboo Kali Prosono Bannerji, Lala Kalka Pershad, Rai Peary Lal, Baboo Mohan Lal, Munshi Keval Kishen, B. A., Baboo Gaendro Indro Nath, M. A., Munshi Ajodhia Pershad, Lala Buldev Sahe, and others. Raja Madho Rao was voted to the chair. He opened discussion in which the members present joined freely, Mr. Malabari answering questions as they arose. The sense of the meeting was strongly pronounced against infant marriages. Thereupon it was proposed by Lala Mohan Lal and seconded by Munshi Gunga Lal, that :—“ this meeting resolves that Infant Marriage is an unmitgated evil and that it should be actively discouraged by leaders of the different sections of the Hindu community, with such aid and co-operation from the State as the said leaders may think proper to invoke.” In the course of the

discussion that followed, the evil was unanimously admitted and there was the same complete consensus of opinion as to the desirability of immediate action being taken. But a few of the gentlemen present were more or less unwilling to invoke the aid of the Government. The whole position was again explained to the meeting by Rai Peary Lal and other friends. But still there was some hesitation on the part of the following gentlemen :—Lala Thakoor Pershad, Pandit Ram Narayan, Lala Durbari Mull, Munshi Mohan Singh, Lala Baij Nath and Munshi Ranjeet Singh. Mr. Malabari then suggested that votes be taken individually and that the Resolution be passed by majority. This was done with alacrity, the above named six gentlemen more or less dissenting. Mr. Malabari requested the dissentients to be so good as to correspond with him, and he hoped soon to convince them of the necessity of some form of moral support from the State. With this they were satisfied. The second Resolution regarding unequal marriages was withdrawn at Mr. Malabari's instance as soon as he understood the peculiar position of affairs at Barielly. This gave conservative friends much satisfaction. The third Resolution was proposed by Rai Peary Lal, seconded by Lala Bishen Lal, M. A., and carried unanimously :—that “ this meeting has every confidence in Mr. Malabari's efforts by which he has laid the Hindu community under lasting obligation, and that a representative committee be formed at Barielly to help him in carrying out his programme.” The following gentlemen were appointed :—Munshi Damodar Dass, President; Rai Durga Lal, Vice-President; Munshi Nand Kishor, Munshi Ram Narayan, and other gentlemen as Members; and Rai Peary Lal and Munshi Runjeet Singh as Honorary Joint Secretaries.

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#### ALLAHABAD.

A Conference of many of the leading Hindu representatives of Allahabad was held at the Kayastha Shala Hall, on the 19th February, to hear Mr. Malabari upon the subject of Infant Marriages and to devise practical measures for the suppression of the custom. Amongst those present were Shastris, Pandits, Municipal Commissioners, Professors, Pleaders, &c. The following names may be noted down :—Pandit Adityaram Bhattacharyaji M. A., Professor of Sanskrit, Muir Central College, Babu Charu Chunder Mitter, Sr.

Vice-Chairman, Municipal Board, Pandit Govind Rao Goray, Munshi Jwala Prasad, Senior Government Pleader, High Court, North West Provinces, Pandit Nanda Lal, Vakil High Court, Munshi Kash; Prasad, Vakil and Municipal Commissioner, Pandit Lukshmi Narayan Vyas, President Hindu Samaj, Mr. R. N. Banerji, Municipal Commissioner, Dr. A. C. Banerji, Municipal Commissioner, Dr. M. N. Odhedar, Kumar Shiva Nath Sinha, Barrister-at-law, Thakur Mahabir Prasad, Honorary Magistrate, Babu Sital Prasad Chatterji, Vakil, Honorary Magistrate and Vice-Chairman District Board, Babu Soshi Bhushan Chatterji, B. A., Babu Taraprasad, M. A., Babu Ratan Chand, B. A., Vakil High Court, Lala Girdhari Lal, B. A., Pandit Karta Kishen, B. A., Pandit Budri Dutt Joshi, Pandit Hari Ram Pande, B. A., Pandit Balam Bhutta Shastri, Pandit Ramprasana Acharya, Moulvi Habibulla, Barrister-at-law, Mr. R. C. Saunders, Solicitor, Lala Hardew Prasad, Vice-Chairman, Theosophical Society, Babu Bhola Nath Chatterji, Secretary, Theosophical Society, Babu Ram Das Chakrabatty, Vakil, Pandit Madan Mohan, B. A., Pandit Jai Gobind, Head Pandit Government High School, Pandit Suraja Prasad, Babu Nand Lal Ghose, of the *Indian Union*, and others. Kumar Shiva Nath Sinha proposed that Professor Adityaram Bhattacharyaji do take the Chair. On Dr. Banerji seconding the proposal Pandit Adityaram took the Chair, and began by saying that the Kumar's kind proposal was a surprise to him. That he was not only unfit to introduce a gentleman like Mr. Malabari to such an audience, but that he thought himself unfit even to be introduced by Mr. Malabari. However, the subject was of such pressing importance, and there was so much work to do that evening, that he would not stand upon ceremony, but at once request Mr. Malabari to enlighten the meeting upon the great problem to the solution of which his gifted friend was contributing so materially.

Mr. Malabari thereupon addressed the meeting thus:—We have not met here, gentleman of Allahabad, to talk about this question, but, as our learned Chairman suggests, to do some practical work with regard to it. And yet, it has once more fallen to my lot to begin with talk and with talk only. I am, however, assured that this Conference will not rise before doing some solid work. And work being our principal object, I'll be as brief as possible this evening. To say, gentlemen, that infant marriages are a curse to India, as our hard-headed friends at Lucknow declared

the other day, would be a mere truism. This scourge of child marriages has afflicted our race for centuries and in a variety of ways. Not the least amongst its baneful consequences the custom gives rise to virgin widowhood. Infant Marriage is admittedly a great evil. No one in his senses pretends to dispute the proposition. The only difference of opinion that can exist as regards this wretched fashion is how to put a stop to it. How indeed? Well, many men many minds. But let us here consult only those minds that are worth consulting. There are three favourite methods suggested by a not inconsiderable body of our educated men,—I. Education, II. Female Education, III. the setting of examples. The former two remedies I had an opportunity of examining day before yesterday at Lucknow. To you to-day I will only say that general education is too unequal between the sexes to be of much avail in the near future. Female education is an excellent means. But, really, is it *the* means, is it the best means to the end in view? How can we talk of female education when our girls are, as a rule, married off too early to obtain any real education at all? Are we honest in talking of Female Education and Infant Marriages in the same breath? To my mind, gentlemen, the coupling of the two phrases is like mocking all hopes of practical reform, every possibility of progress. (Cheers.)

Along with education we are advised to have tracts and pamphlets and lectures and missionary tours. Excellent suggestions. Let us have all these good things; the more merrier. But, my friends, *whom* are you going to lecture and write tracts and pamphlets for? —not to ask you about organization and the sinews of war. And how much do you expect from prematurely married missionaries?—granting for argument's sake that you will have volunteers for the asking, and that caste and locality and language will not stand in the way of success. God forbid that I should make light of your remedies. They have their value, and I think I have contributed my mite to each one of these methods of work. But at the same time, I must beg of you, gentlemen, not to make too much of these auxiliary, these subsidiary methods. Do not mistake ends for means, my friends. Tracts and pamphlets and lectures and missionary tours—organized efforts, in short,—will be best available then and then only when women in India are able to co-operate with men in this cause. (Oheers.) And this co-operation is impossible (and with it every form of national progress) so long as we stick to this suicidal

practice of infant marriages. (Loud cheers). Yes, gentlemen, is there much to choose between suicide and infant marriage? If there is, I think the balance inclines in favour of the former crime (Hear, hear). And supposing for a moment that education and the other means suggested may prove efficacious in the distant future, are we to do nothing else in the meantime? Have we any right to prolong the misery of the nation? The heart of the nation has been grievously oppressed for centuries. How long is this oppression to last? Have we not suffered enough—have we not fallen sufficiently low? Do not wrong me, my friends, by mistaking this persistence for a species of selfish impatience. I am ever ready to work and content to wait. But we have waited too long already, and I hold it a sin to wait a day longer, under the altered circumstances of the country. Under a settled Government like this it is more than ever necessary to discard a custom which handicaps the people and keeps it down in almost every concern of life. (Hear, hear.)

Now come we to the setting of practical examples. This is a remedy worth trying. Let leaders of the community set concrete examples, and the people are sure to follow. The progress will, no doubt, be slow, in India much slower than in any other country; but it will be sure nevertheless (Hear). Let every Hindu father say he will not marry his daughter under 12, and the thing is done so far as he is concerned. He has done his duty manfully. If a few fathers set this example in every town, the future of the people may be taken as assured. Caste may oppose the movement and ex-communicate its promoters. But if these latter stand firm, caste may find herself an outcast in the long run. But let the practical reformer ask himself—"is this possible for me to do?—is it desirable in my own interest and of society at large?" I am very doubtful about it, gentlemen. Individuals have made the attempt and have been crushed under it. They have failed invariably, within my experience; and what is worse, they have discredited the cause and thrown it back for long. Why? Because they attempted more than human beings could do under the circumstances. (Hear, hear). Those who have the slightest acquaintance with the inner life of the Hindu — of his joint family system, his reverence for elders, and his regard for relations and connections of all degrees—will understand me without any further explanation. They will agree with me in thinking that so long as

society in India remains what it is, it will be all but impossible for an individual reformer to set the example. I say it is unjust to him and inexpedient on public grounds to insist upon this course as the only feasible one.

What, then, are we to do? Well, gentlemen, I'll not keep you waiting long, especially as most of you seem to have anticipated me. Let us make persistent and organized efforts. Let us have Committees on which every considerable section of the community is represented by its leaders. Let these representatives be honest, earnest workers. Let these men devise practical methods—lectures, pamphlets, missionary tours, with all my heart; let them fix a minimum limit of age for the girl; let them take a pledge to this effect, and let them ask the Government to enable them to enforce the pledge upon themselves, so as to be above the control of foolish women and selfish priests (Hear). Let them arrange among themselves that an infant marriage, which is neither a *sanskar* (sacrament) nor a *karar* (legal contract) shall not be recognised as such by the Court of law in case of dispute. Let them make adequate provision for the victims of infant marriages, especially for the girl whom they are so anxious to condemn to perpetual widowhood. This may put a check upon extravagance in many ways. If parents insist upon marrying infants, are they not bound, legally as well as morally, to take the consequences? (Hear, hear.) Let the Committees ask Government to raise the age for consummation. In short, it is open to these representative Committees to try the educational test, the municipal test, the service test and a number of social tests which will suggest themselves to practical men the minute they sit down with a will to work. (Hear, hear.) The Committees will be the Punchayets of old, capable of uniform action without which you must expect no results to speak of. Thus, you see, gentlemen, I am asking you to do nineteen-twentieths of the work yourselves. But there is the remaining one-twentieth, essential to the success of the cause, which must come from elsewhere. Gentlemen, I do not wish to thrust this view upon you. I myself resisted it for four years. For four long years I set my face against extraneous aid. But the more I studied the problem, the nearer was I driven to the conclusion arrived at by Ragoonath Row and Ranade. Two years ago, after more than ten years of study and after four years of struggle to escape



this conviction, I found myself at last convinced of the soundness of that view. The position is this. Every nation has its marriage law. So have you—or rather you had your marriage law when you were a nation—the wisest law yet devised by human intellect. I am referring, of course, to the law of Manu (Cheers). Well, gentlemen, in an evil hour you departed from that law—perhaps you were forced by the then existing circumstances to depart from the law. Those adverse circumstances ceased to operate long since, but the departure has grown wider with the lapse of time, with results which no Arya can contemplate without anguish. Well, gentlemen, the conscience of the nation, such as it is, has awakened to the necessity of immediately going back to the old law. But it cannot go back in a body without some aid from the Government which can best guide and direct its steps, which alone can regulate its action.

Why hesitate to utilize this beneficent agency? Because, we are reminded, it is a foreign agency. In that case, gentlemen, is not the agency of God a foreign agency? Here we have a number of educated men telling us that if the Government were their own, they would gladly avail themselves of its regulating authority. (I trust some of our enlightened Native Princes will take the hint). So it is because we are under a foreign rule that we decline to reform ourselves. Good. And what do those mad men, Ranade and Ragoonath Row, wish this alien Government to do? To help you, at *your* instance and with *your* consent, to go back to your own (Loud Cheers). This is the head and front of their offence. You would gladly have this form of co-operation from your own Government. But because the country happens to be entrusted to an alien power—which is likely to remain here as long as, say, infant marriages are perpetrated in India—because of this circumstance alone, you refuse to have that which you cannot do without. You are anxious to improve; some friendly impulse from outside is indispensable to your improvement; and still you go on arguing in a circle and putting off the realization of your cherished hope. My friends, this is sheer wantonness. As I said before, you are flying in the face of Providence (Hear). As well may you say to God Almighty, “Go away, we don’t want providential interference; we are B. A.’s and M. A.’s (Laughter). We have read Bentham and Buckle, have you read Mill and Spencer? Go away,

we *will* commit suicide, and you *shall* not save us. Who are you? —You are not we"! (Cheers and applause). Gentlemen, one of you was telling me last night that this attitude of mind might imply "intellectual emancipation." And he quoted high authority for the purpose. I cannot say if this opinion is largely shared in the North West Provinces. But one thing I may venture to assert—that in fathering such an opinion upon the gentleman whose respected name was mentioned last night, our friend did injustice to that gentleman, to myself, to the idea conveyed by the words "intellectual emancipation" and to the cause which is equally dear to us all (Cheers). Such an attitude does not betoken intellectual emancipation, but perhaps intellectual emasculation. It implies want of that robust masculine sense of confidence which I long to see revived in our countrymen. (Hear, hear). It will be better for you and for others, my friends, if you begin with confidence, instead of distrust. Suspect no one till you have cause to do so. Fear nothing if you have truth on your side. Work on with truth as your guide, and you will succeed in spite of the whole world. (Loud cheers). Gentlemen of Allahabad, I will not detain you any longer.

Munshi Kashi Prasad, before proposing the first resolution, briefly translated Mr. Malabari's speech; after which he addressed the meeting on his own account. The Munshi Sahib spoke with great energy, denouncing infant marriages from every conceivable point of view, and tracing to them the present degradation of a noble race. He passed some scathing criticism on the apathy of his countrymen, and held them responsible for the ruin of the country. Mr. Kashi Prasad's humorous remarks made the audience laugh heartily, as he described the ludicrous ceremony of baby marriages, and then he turned upon them fiercely saying, "Why do you laugh?—there is good reason to shed tears of blood over these misfortunes." In this strain he spoke for a few minutes, holding the audience spell-bound. The speaker's reference to the condition of Hindu widows was most painful, and he himself fairly broke down as he referred to the condition of girl-widows. The cares and anxieties, as well as other evils attending premature marriages, forbade all hope of social amenity in India, and in this state of society to expect political unity or material prosperity was out of the question. Mr. Kashi Prasad gave practical illustration of this view, and concluded with an impressive

appeal to leaders of the community to devise practical measures of relief. We regret we have not been supplied with notes of this and other speeches, which were mostly in Hindustani. Munshi Kashi Prasad proposed that :—

“ This meeting is of opinion that too early marriages of boys and girls, so widely prevalent in the Hindu community, are productive of the physical, intellectual and moral deterioration of the race, and that they lead, in a large measure, to increased percentage of childwidows—a great social evil in itself; and that it should be the duty of every thoughtful, patriotic Hindu to discourage this evil practice by all private efforts and with such moral support of Government as may be conducive to a speedy removal of this baneful custom, without creating popular alarm by its action.”

This Resolution was seconded by Thakur Mahabir Prasad Singh in a neat little speech.

The second resolution about forming a Committee was proposed by Pandit Lukshmi Narayan Vyas, the famous Vaid, who made an important speech, examining the physical and the spiritual results of early marriages. About the former he spoke from professional experience, and his remarks made a very painful sensation. He described several instances of premature consummation in which the girls had been ruined for life. The Pandit spoke freely, as he observed the audience did not contain school-boys. For the crime above referred to, Pandit Lukshmi Narayan invoked the aid of a penal law, as nothing less could cope with this terrible evil. On the spiritual side of the question also the Vyasji dwelt at some length. He ridiculed the idea of a certain priest advocating marriages at 8 and 9, and quoted an array of unimpeachable authorities, shastric, medical and legal, against that solitary modern instance. The old Vyas was loudly applauded in the course of his speech. His resolution was seconded by the venerable Pandit Balam Bhatta Shastri. It was supported by Pandit Rama Prasana Acharya, who referred to the evil effects of child marriages and widowhood on the morals of society. The Acharya observed that the Government was bound, in the interests of society, to have criminal rulings on the subject, based upon shastric rules, like the civil law of the Hindus based on the same ground. Such a course would divest the action of every appearance of interference.

The third resolution, "that this meeting expresses its sense of gratitude to Mr. Malabari for his disinterested labours towards this great cause for the welfare of the Hindu people," was proposed by Pandit Madan Mohan, B. A., who said that infant marriage was like a cancer, and that instead of allowing it to fester and mortify, it would be the part of wisdom to use the lancet on it. To this extent, the Pandit said, he had been converted to the view that some aid from the Government might be invoked for the timely suppression of the practice. The resolution was seconded by Pandit Govind Rao Goray. The three resolutions were, then, one by one put before the meeting and were carried unanimously.

Before dissolving the Conference the President, Professor Bhattacharya, said he had to make a "confession of faith." He observed that he had been up to yesterday strongly opposed, on principle, to Government help of any kind. But that the previous night he had a long and animated discussion with Mr. Malabari, and in the course of that discussion he had to yield to the voice of reason. On parting Mr. Malabari gave him some papers by the Hon'ble Mr. Ranade and Dewan Bahadur Ragoonath Row, a perusal of which overnight confirmed him in the new faith. The Chairman concluded by saying that though it might be possible for society to reform itself by its own unaided efforts, no one could say *when* such a time would come and that, therefore, for speedy relief it was wise to accept some sort of support from the Government. Pandit Bhattacharya's explanation was listened to with great attention, as he has the confidence of all sections of the community of Allahabad. Towards the formation of the Working Committee only one gentleman hesitated to give his name, as he was not sure as to the desirability of Government action. But at Mr. Malabari's suggestion, that he might co-operate so far as his principle allowed him to do, the gentleman was good enough to agree.

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## BENARES.

A meeting of the principal citizens of Benares was held at the Town Hall on Sunday, the 21st February, 1886, at the instance of the Kasi Sarvajanic Sabha, to welcome Mr. B. M. Malabari of Bombay and to consider his proposals with respect to the discouragement of Infant Marriages among Hindus.

The following gentlemen, among others, attended the meeting:—Raja Sambhu Narayan Sinha Bahadur, C. W. Whish Esq., C. S.; Joint Magistrate, Babu Ram Kali Chaudhuri, late Subordinate Judge, and Honorary Magistrate, Babu Kasi Nath Biswas, Subordinate Judge, Pandit Bapudeva Shastri, C. I. E., Professor of Astronomy, Sanskrit College Benares, Babu Madhu Sudandas, Rais and Zemindar, Babu Durga Prasad, Rais and Honorary Magistrate, Babu Keshavaram, Rais and Banker, Babu Shyamadas, Rais and Banker, Pandit Raj Nath, Munsif, Pandit Ram Misra Shastri, Professor of Sankhya Philosophy Sanskrit College Benares, Chowdhary Ram Prasad, Rais and Zemindar, Gosain Shivadat Giri, Rais and Banker, Babu Kaly Charan Banerji, Deputy Collector, Dr. Chanoolal, Hafiz Altaf Husain, Tahsildar, Munshi Ram Pratap, late Tahsildar and Honorary Magistrate, Munshi Raghunandan Prasad B. A., Vakeel, Babu Upendra Nath Basu, B. A., Babu Umesh Chandra Sanyal, M. A., Professor of Mathematics, Benares College, Babu Abhaya Charan Sanyal, M. A., Professor of Physical Science, Benares College, Babu Jadu Nath Ghose, Pandit Kedar Nath Vachaspati, Professor Sanskrit College, Pandit Siva Kumar Shastri, Munshi Ram Krishna, Pandit Gangadhar Shastri, Munshi Baldeva Sahai, late Police Inspector, Babu Lakshmandas, Rais, Babu Aprakash Chandra Mukerji, Babu Jogendra Nath Ghose, B. A., Pleader, and Babu Damodardas B. A., Professor of Physical Science, L. M. College, and Secretary Kasi Sarvajanic Sabha.

Raja Sambhu Narayan Sinha Bahadur was voted to the Chair at the motion of Babu Damodardas, B. A., which was seconded by Gosain Shivadat Giri.

The Chairman introduced Mr. Malabari to the gentlemen present and explained the object of the meeting.

Mr. Malabari then rose, and in a short, but very impressive speech described some of the chief evils that arose from *Infant Marriage*, pointedly alluding to the monstrous character of the sense involved in the expression itself, and deploring the amount of human suffering associated with the idea conveyed by the allied term *Virgin-Widowhood*. He observed that the country was unanimous in condemning the baneful custom, and that its removal would supply a remedy for almost all the evils India was groaning under, and briefly enumerated some of the agencies at work in society, such as

the spread of education and individual efforts, which are relied upon by some as being sufficient to effect a cure. But he referred to past experience, as showing the exceedingly slow progress they had hitherto made in working out a satisfactory change, and thought them to be of little efficacy in themselves to stop the increasingly deteriorating effects of this obnoxious custom. He pointed out that the removal of more than nine-tenths of the evil depended upon the efforts of the people themselves, and strongly urged to that end the extreme necessity for resorting to organised movements throughout the country ; and for the remaining less than one-tenth, he left the meeting to infer the need there was for betaking to Government for such help as might be deemed desirable. Mr. Malabari concluded amidst the hearty applause of the audience, observing that a Committee should be formed at Benares to educate public opinion on the subject and adopt measure for the prevention of Infant Marriages.

Babu Ram Kali Chaudhuri translated this address in Hindustani for the benefit of those gentlemen who could not understand English, and added some pithy remarks of his own in support of the views.

**RESOLUTION I.**—Proposed by Babu Madhu Sudandas, seconded by Pandit Bapudeva Shastri, C. I. E., and supported by Pandit Ram Misra Shastri :—

“That this meeting, being sorrowfully well aware of the deterioration of race and other innumerable evils arising from the prevalence of the custom of Infant Marriage in our country, considers it highly necessary to direct its strong and continuous endeavours towards its prevention, with any judicious aid of the Government which might be deemed desirable for the timely attainment of the object.” (*Carried unanimously.*)

Pandit Ram Misra Shastri in supporting the above resolution very ably showed that Infant Marriage was the cause of our physical and intellectual degeneration, and that it was altogether against the rulings of the *Shastras*. He quoted *slokas* from Manu, Mahabharata, and other recognised Hindu authorities, to prove that early marriages never existed among the Aryans and were not sanctioned by their sacred writings.

**RESOLUTION II.**—Proposed by Munshi Ram Krishna, seconded by Babu Shyamadas :—

"That the following gentlemen form a Committee for the purpose of carrying out the above resolution, with power to add to their number:—Mr. C. W. Whish, C S., Raja Sambhu Narayan Sinha Bahadur, Babu Ram Kali Chaudhuri, Babu Madhusudandas, Pandit Raj Nath, Pandit Ram Misra Shastri, and Munshi Raghunandan Prasad, B.A.," (*Carried unanimously.*)

RESOLUTION III.—Proposed by Pandit Raj Nath, seconded by Hafiz Altaf Husain and supported by Munshi Raghunandan Prasad. B.A:—

"That this meeting considers it to be its grateful duty to record its deep thankfulness to Mr. Malabari for the labour and zeal he has been showing in the promotion of social reforms of vital importance to our country, and for the honour he has done us by his kind visit to our ancient city of Benares."—(*Carried unanimously*)

The meeting closed with a vote of hearty thanks to the Chairman.

## M U T H R A.

On the 25th of February, 1886, Mr. Malabari, . . . accompanied by Munshi Baijnath, B. A., of Agra, arrived at Mathura at 7-45 p. m. He was received at the station by Pandit Alopi Prasad, the Munsif, and Babu Dwarka Prasad Secretary, Mathura Institute and Indian Temperance League, and Vice-President of the Arya Samaj, Mathura.

The party then drove to the house of Munsif Alopi Prasad, where Mr. Malabari stayed over night. Immediately the guests got down the carriage they requested Pandit Alopi Prasad to circulate a notice which was done accordingly.

Next morning a special meeting of the principal residents of the City and Sudder Bazaar was held at the house of Pandit Alopi Prasad, and it was resolved that a public meeting should be held in the Government High School building at 6-30, in the evening, the same day.

In the evening, at the hour fixed, the most enthusiastic and one of the largest meetings ever held was witnessed, consisting of all the Raises and other inhabitants of Mathura, Brindaban and Mahaban. The hall was full, the verandas and the roads were crowded. Most

of the eminent Pandits of the town were present, and among others were seen the following :—

Seth Mangilal, Rais; Munshi Ram Chandra, Rais; Pandit Alopri Prasad, Munsif; Munshi Jaggan Nath, Pleader; Babu Tarin Charan Sanyal, B. A.; Munshi Ganga Prasad; Chobey Gendalal, Pleader; Pandit Sant Lal; Munshi Narayan Das; Pandit Kesho Das; Kuir Hidayat Alikhan, Tehsildar; Babu Vazir Singh, Pleader; Babu Kuir Sein, Postmaster; Babu Rama Nath, Rais; Babu Kali Chand Banerjee; Pandit Baldeo Narain Singh, Rais; Pandit Shamlal; Babu Ram Dial; Raja Udit Narayan Singh, Rais; Pandit Baddri Datta Joshi, Deputy Collector; Pandit Radha Charan Goswami; Babu Atma Ram, B.A., Head Master; Moulvi Abdool Hadi, Pleader; Munshi Ram Narain; Chobey Gordhan Das; Munshi Dwarka Prasad; Munshi Har Prasad; Pandit Radha Keshan, Deputy Collector; Munshi Radhey Prasad, Pleader; Munshi Gulab Chand, Pleader; Babu Narayan Das, Rais; Rao Balwant Singh of Awah; Babu Ram Narain Singh Verma; Moulvi Riazuddin Amjad; Babu Shamlal Chowdhri; Babu Jaggan Nath Khattri; Pandit T. Nath Munshi; Pandit Daya Shankar; Pandit Ambika Prasad; Pandit Radheyal; Swami Swatma Nand Saraswati; Babu Gopal Singh, &c. &c.

Seth Lachhman Dass, the famous Seth of Mathura, was to preside on the occasion, but having been prevented by an engagement in the Temple, and having sent a message of sympathy, Pandit Baddri Datta Joshi, Rais of Kumaun and Honorary Deputy Collector Mathura, was voted to the chair.

Munshi Dwarka Prasad acted at Secretary to the meeting.

The worthy Chairman, remarking on the custom of infant marriage, said that it was a matter to be deeply regretted that while a stranger tried so hard to help us, we, interested most in the matter, should sit silent. He then referred to Sati and other practices already put down, and said there was no necessity of putting a check on infant marriage then, (even if the custom was prevalent in the days of yore) but the want of suppression is extremely felt now. If the Indians expect any help from the State in this regard the State cannot help us without our doing something and going before the Government. Pandit Badri Datta dwelt at great length on the various evils arising from infant marriage and then spoke of Mr. Malabari's work in terms of the highest praise.



Mr. Malabari . . . attracted the notice of every one present, by his impressive, very wise and suggestive remarks. He observed:—

“Gentlemen of Muthra,

The worthy president has spoken so much and so ably on the subject of infant marriages that there remains very little for me to add. But let me ask you, gentlemen—what do you mean by *infant marriage*? I asked the same question to our learned friends at Benares, and the only answer I got was—hanging down of their heads and clapping (which appeared like wringing) of the hands. What meaning do you attach to this impossible combination of words, infant marriage? Is it human language or what? I can understand what is meant by *infant*, which means a human being too young to speak its mind. I can also understand the word *marriage*, being a married man. But I really cannot make out what *infant marriage* means. No other nation on earth uses this expression. Your own sacred books give not a trace of either the idea or the practice of infant marriage. If you speak to any one outside of India about infant marriage he would not be able to understand you. Our English friends in India do not realize the full significance of the words. What is marriage? It is either a civil contract or a sacrament. I prefer the latter interpretation. Well, if marriage is a *sanskar*, how can you put *sanskar*, the most important, the most sacred, the most binding ceremony, on an *infant*? (cheers.) How dare you put *sanskar* upon a piece of clay? (Renewed cheers.) There is no sense, no religion in such a ceremony. It is the most nonsensical, the most irreligious thing we could do, according to Shastras. If you think about it for a moment you will agree that there can be no such thing in nature as *Infant Marriage*.

And what, again, is a *Virgin Widow*? My venerable friend Ragoonath Row startled me the other day with the question——pray what is a *Virgin Widow*? I repeat the question before you. What is a *Virgin Widow*? Do you apply the expression to a human being? A *virgin* who is at the same time a *widow*! A *widow* who is also a *virgin* at one and the same time! What a contradiction in terms! (Loud cheers.) And what is a *girl-wife*, what is a *boy-husband*? (Cheers.) What, I ask you, gentlemen, is a *girl-mother* and what is a *boy-father*? (Cheers.) What are all these extraordinary beings we have been speaking about? Are they a playing

with words, or the creations of some deranged intellect, or are they realities? Refer me to a single nation, modern or ancient, who uses or has used such phrases as I have quoted above (Applause). Really, there can be no such phenomenon in nature as a *girl-wife* or a *girl-mother*, a *virgin-widow* or an *infant marriage*. And yet, you know that both the ideas and the practices implied by these phrases are by no means uncommon in India. (Cheers.) Just think of the enormity of your unnaturalness — your sin against yourselves, against your country, against Nature and Nature's God. (Loud Cheers.) My friends, make up your minds not to live under such conditions any longer. Try to follow the law of Manu; you have fallen so low by neglecting that law. (Applause.) Don't wait till things mend themselves. (No, no.) Don't wait till somebody else comes to your rescue unasked. Don't wait till all the women of India become educated and independent of you. That time, you take precious care, is never likely to come. If you care to rise as a nation, politically and materially, if you care to be public spirited citizens, patriots, merchants, masters; if you care to keep pace with your fortunate Mahomedan and Parsi brethren, give up these evil things in life, to begin with. (Prolonged cheers.) I have nothing more to say to you, gentlemen of Muthra."

Pandit Alopi Prasad translated Mr. Malabari's speech into Urdu in a most satisfactory way, adding a few remarks from himself. The following resolutions were then passed.

- I. Proposed by Pandit Radha Charan Goswami, seconded by Pandit B. D. Joshi and supported by Munshi Jaggan Nath Prasad, and carried unanimously, that "this Meeting of the principal inhabitants of Mathura and others, after hearing Mr. Malabari, is decidedly of opinion that Infant Marriage and its attendant evils are a very great obstacle in the way of the general progress of the country, and that concerted action should be taken by the heads of the different sections of the community, in conjunction with Government, to put down this ruinous custom."
- II. Proposed by Pandit Alopi Prasad, seconded by Babu T. C. Sanyal and supported by Moulvi A. Hadi and carried unanimously, that "a working Committee, with power to add to their numbers, be formed to take active practical

steps in co-operation with Mr. Malabari to carry out the first Resolution, and a working Committee of the representative men of Mathura, with Seth Lachhman Das as President and Munshi Dwarka Prasad as Secretary, be accordingly formed."

- III. Proposed by Babu Atma Ram, B. A., seconded by Babu Kali Chand Banerji and supported by Munshi Ram Narain, and carried by all the members with loud cheers, that, "this Meeting whilst expressing their utmost confidence in Mr. Malabari's mission, desire to place on record their sense of deep gratitude to that gentleman, and also to Munshi Baijnath, B. A., for his patriotic interest in awakening public interest in the matter.

The proposers, seconders and supporters, in the case of each Resolution, addressed the meeting, mostly in Urdu. The speeches were very much appreciated by the audience who cheered the speakers repeatedly. Babu T. C. Sanayal, B. A. spoke in English, dwelling at some length on the disadvantages of premature marriage from various points. He condemned the practice emphatically and called upon the audience in vigorous language to put it down.

Babu Baijnath, B. A., in the course of an interesting and humorous speech, replied to the vote of thanks to himself and to Mr. Malabari and suggested the means of keeping up the Committee and of achieving success thereby. He spoke bitterly as to the results on the nation of this baneful custom. He was followed by Brahmchari Swatmanand Saraswati, who gave a long and animated discourse, quoting step by step various authorities of the Shastras in favour of this reform, and proved to the satisfaction of the audience that the custom of infant marriages was altogether against the spirit and letter of our Shastras.

With a vote of thanks to the Chairman and the Parsi reformer, the meeting broke up, after a sitting of nearly three hours. Mr. Malabari left Mathura early next morning.

## SOCIAL REFORM IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCES.

(By *Lala Baij Nath*, B.A.).

### (1). INFANT MARRIAGES.

Infant Marriage has been written upon and discussed so often that to add anything new to what has been said is rather difficult, whilst to repeat it is to repeat a twicetold tale. But all that has been said of provinces and people more advanced than the North West Provinces—and I have put these stray thoughts on paper more with a view to directing our people's attention to the enormity of the evil than with that of adding much new matter to the already vast literature on this subject. Infant Marriage is as rampant here as elsewhere. Its evil consequences could be traced both inside and outside the *pardha*. But the Hindu law or religion does not sanction the practice. Manu, for instance, never contemplated the marriage of a youth below 18 when he enjoined his marrying after he had read at least one Veda in the house of his Guru. On the contrary, he enjoined entry into the *grihasth ashram* at a much later age, after a study of all the four Vedas, which at the lowest took some 20 or 25 years. For girls, too, he was not at all so nervous as our latter day religious teachers are, for he expressly laid down that rather than give her to an unsuitable person, she had better be kept unmarried, and that if she was married within three years of her reaching the marriageable age she could select her own husband (Manu Chap. III. verses 1-4 and Chap. IX verses 88-91 to 94). So did also the Grihya Sutras, which claim equal authority with Manu, and so does our present marriage ceremonial, which in these days so few of the Brahmins understand, but which many repeat with parrot-like accuracy, inculcate. Otherwise, that portion of the marriage ritual, where the bride and the bridegroom are to make certain stipulations to each other before the final step is taken, would be meaningless. These stipulations relate to the husband treating his wife with consideration, more as a friend, helpmate and counsellor than as a slave, and to the wife's rendering all due obedience to the husband and to follow him through thick and thin, through good and evil fortune. Had the old Aryans not realized the importance of men and women exercising their choice in the matter of matrimony, they would not have given that prominence

to Svayamvara (selection of husbands often by competition) which was so much in vogue, especially amongst the Rajputs or Kshatriyas, in both pre-Vedic and post-Vedic times. The bride used to be led by an attendant, who described the qualifications of each candidate, or some trial of bravery was instituted, and the victor was awarded the prize.

How, then, did infant marriage arise? The answer shortly is, insecurity of female honour under weak and unsettled Government, whether of Hindus or Mohamedans, probably of both, the anxiety of religious teachers to give an expediency the force of religious sanction, and the apathy and supineness of the people to free themselves from an institution long after all justification for its continuance had ceased—these and similar causes gave rise to this custom. In the Upper Provinces, whatever might be said of the more civilized parts of India, instead of Vedas or the Puranas the popular defence of Infant Marriage is the following text of one Kashi Nath, contained in a work called the Shegra Bodh:—"A girl married at 8 is Gauri (Siva's wife) at 9 Rohini (Krishna's mother), at 10 Kanya (a maiden) thereafter she reaches puberty. The father, mother, and elder brother of a girl go to hell should they see her attain her puberty in their family." In the same strain another author condemns both the giver and taker of a girl who has arrived at puberty in her father's family to a region of vermin, and declares a father who keeps such a girl unmarried guilty of infanticide. But how, it would be asked, did such absurdities come to be believed in by a people who boast of such a glorious past, such a rich literature, such subtle philosophy? The answer is that the Hindu is eminently religious. His religion is a living force with him, and always keeps him company—eating, drinking, sleeping or waking, he is bound up in his religion. A people so eminently religious it would be difficult to find. The Hindu's religious teacher, the Brahmin, knows this, and taking advantage of it gives any precept he wishes to enforce the sanction of religion and appeals to his disciple's ideas of reward and punishment hereafter, with the result that the latter believes without questioning or troubling himself about the precept being ever so contrary to commonsense. The Brahmin is nothing if he is not mysterious, and the national mind, having been crushed and enslaved under a thousand and one repressive influences, lost all power to question the validity of his precepts, till English education and

Western culture came in to its aid. The isolation of India from the rest of the world, as well as the isolation of India's one part from another, till the introduction of steamships, railways and telegraph, also kept the Hindu's knowledge of the world much where it was before, and so complete was the absence of all friction of thoughts and opinions, so great the power of caste and custom, that Mahomedanism also partly succumbed to the latter's influence, and early marriage, prohibition of re-marriage of widows, and many other Hindu practices, are as religiously observed by certain classes of Mohamedans as if they formed part of the Koran. So the Hindu custom is everything, the highest and the lowest are bound by it, and from its authority there is no appeal: unlike fashions in the West it is hard to change it, especially where apathy and listlessness superinduced by climate and the teaching of our Shastras make let-alone-ism the characteristic of the people. To even the ordinary Hindu the world is a phantom, a dream, *maya* (illusion)—why should he work, for to-morrow he dies, or why should one care for what does not concern himself?—is the feeling of many a Hindu. Unlike England a thousand other repressive influences in India also encourage slothfulness, and it would be hard to find people to undertake what does not concern their private affairs. These and similar other causes explain why social absurdities have still so great a hold upon men and women of our parts. A very large portion of our people are also grossly ignorant of the teachings of their religion. To them what the Brahmin says is the voice of God. They have not the ability nor the inclination to question his sayings. Our newly educated men have also more or less neglected the study of their ancient classic, and though well read in the philosophy of the West, they not unoften show their ignorance of their own literature and philosophy. It is not therefore at all suprising if with all their English learning and University degrees our young North Westerners still show so much backwardness in matters of social reform. "In Benares and other cities," says Sherring in his *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, "are many men of intelligence and education, who are capable of being leaders of their fellow countrymen in the abandonment of superstitions and the adoption of new ideas and habits, conformable to the education they have received and the enlightenment their minds have experienced; like the Bengalees of whom I have

been speaking they have knowledge, but strange to say they have little or no conviction, no strength of character, no resolution, no clear perception and no consciousness that increased knowledge implies increased responsibility. With all their weight of learning, the possession of which enables them to carry off University degrees and honours, they are perfectly content to mingle amongst the most superstitious and ignorant Hindus, to do as they do, to obey their foolish dictum as law, and to have no other aim in life than to conform to the rigid usage of their ancestors." Would that this charge were untrue! At heart all of us are reformers, but timidity and the undesirableness of being thought to be eccentric or singular, as well as of being exposed to adverse criticism of friends and relatives, keep many of us from setting ourselves about in reforming customs the absurdity or the perniciousness of which we are fully convinced of, which are neither sanctioned by reason or religion, or from exposing those who depart from them to any religious or social disability, such as exclusion from caste. &c. Well may our opponents, therefore, say that we are strange paradoxes. We have been taught without being instructed, and though possessed of much knowledge we fail to put what we know to practical uses, to assimilate what we have learnt. Otherwise, Infant Marriage, with all its attendant evils, could never have been so rampant here.

Statistics are, however, more eloquent than declamation, and we shall venture to give some from the last Census report.

1 to 9 years of age married.	Males	Females
General population .....	1,27,821	2,80,790
Hindus .....	1,17,639	2,54,168
Mahomedans.....	10,088	26,328

10 to 14 years of age married.		
General population .....	6,01,526	11,64,564
Hindus .....	5,44,501	10,36,952
Mahomedans.....	55,920	1,25,515

*Widowers and Widows*

1 to 9 years of age.		
General population .....	4,449	4,673
Hindus .....	3,957	4,157
Mahomedans.....	482	499

## 10 to 14 years of age.

General population .....	21,941	23,593
Hindus .....	19,481	21,417
Mahomedans.....	2,398	2,113

## 15 to 19 years age.

General population .....	42,988	42,260
Hindus .....	37,981	37,797
Mahomedans.....	4,908	4,308

The figures, moreover, show that amongst Hindus 44 in a thousand, and amongst Mohamedans 24 in a thousand, are married between the ages of 1 and 9, whilst between the ages of 10 and 15 the number is 220 in a thousand for Hindus, and 147 in a thousand amongst Mohamedans. The proportion of child widows between 1 and 20 is somewhat larger than the proportion of boy widowers, because many a girl is married to elderly men, often of the age of 40 and upwards. The census report also tells us that whilst not one in a hundred boys is married in England between the ages of 1 and 15, about half of them are married in these Provinces, and whilst out of a 100 females of the age of 20 and upwards 29·55 were widows in N. W. Provinces and Oudh, only 13·60 were widows in England. Up to the age of fifteen no English girl could be a widow nor an English lad a widower, and between the ages of 15 and 20 only 40 per cent of boy-husbands and 47·5 per cent of women had but a remote chance of widowhood with no prohibition of remarriage, whilst in the N. W. Provinces as many as *seventy thousand girls*, the majority of whom were Hindus, had all the miseries of lifelong widowhood to bear without any prospect of bettering their condition. The figures also show that Infant Marriage prevails amongst certain classes of Mahomedans too, and not altogether in the lower classes.

How detrimental Infant Marriage is to the people of India is further seen from the fact that the number of births to every hundred wives, between the ages of 20 and 40, was  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent higher in England than in the North West Provinces, whilst between the ages of 15 and 35 it was  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent higher. In this country there were more births from women under 20 and few from those above 40, whilst it is almost exactly the reverse in England. Therefore, though Englishwomen marry later in life the average number of



child births amongst them is much higher than amongst women of these provinces, and whilst child bearing, as a rule, ceases with our women when they are about 32, in England it continues for 10 or 15 years after. Moreover, the fact that between the ages of 10 and 19 we have about sixty thousand widowers and as many widows proves that many of our girls break down during the first confinement or even earlier, and many of our boys from strain caused by mental and sexual exertion, in addition to the thousand disorders incidental to the early period of life. It is, therefore, not suprising if not more than 10 per cent of boys who enter schools on the same day succeed in attaining a University degree, and this also at the cost of their health. There is no individuality amongst us natives, and the North West Provinces have no Vidya Sagar, Keshub Chander Sen, Raghu Nath Rao or Malabari to boast of. Even in England fashion reigns supreme, and people like to act in grooves ; but unlike India, England has always one or two persons who by their individuality lead the masses and succeed in bringing about any desired reform. Here, on the contrary, though early marriage is an admitted evil, and though education has made so much progress amongst us as to have made us alive to its evils, yet it was reserved for Mr. Malabari to give the discussion a character for universality and to awaken public interest in the cause of social reform.

The lower classes of Hindus are more sensible in this respect. For instance, amongst Bheels, according to Sherring, a girl is not married till she is 20 or 25 years of age. Her father can do nothing to promote her marriage, but must wait, as in civilized countries, until a proposal is made on the part of a young man seeking a wife. When such proposal is made the question is how much money is to be paid for the girl (Hindu Tribes and Castes Vol. III. p. 84). The same might be said of Jats and other tribes, and even amongst Banyas, Brahmins, Khattris, Kayasths and other high castes of the North West Provinces Infant Marriage is more a luxury indulged in by the more well-to-do than the less well-to-do, for an infant marriage means so much more expense, and even religious merit is often subordinated to one's means. In families or castes where marriages of girls at from 12 to 16 and of men from 20 and upwards are common the proportion of girl widows as well of girl mothers

dying in child-bed or bringing forth sickly children is much smaller than in the higher castes or wealthier families. Unequal marriage is also due to prohibition of intermarriages amongst castes; such intercommunions were not uncommon in times gone by, and some persons, whose opinions are entitled to respect, think that all the present thousand and one castes, except the Brahmins, Rajpoots and Banyas, are the offspring of such unions. But such intermarriages are so much looked down upon now that even in different sections of the same caste they could not be indulged in with impunity. For instance, a Sarswat Brahmin would never marry his son or daughter in the family of a Gour Brahmin, without losing caste, and *vice versa*. Amongst Rajputs intermarriages amongst various sections of the caste are more common, and this class has thus set a most worthy example to other classes of Hindus, though even one section of this community, the Baghl Rajputs, deems itself lowered by intermarriage with any other section of the Rajput community. This limitation of marriage in certain castes or families has led to a most absurd custom amongst a section of the Brahmin community, called the Chobas or properly *Chaturbedis* (learned in the four Vedas), but who in these degenerate times are not even able to read one, not to say the four Vedas. This class has a custom that on the occasion of a girl being given by one family to another, the latter will give a girl to a youth of the former. This is called *Badla* or exchange, and the obligation is enforced even up to the second and third generations, and many Chobas who have no expectation of having girls in their families have to keep their boys unmarried in consequence. Talking to a member of this caste the other day I pointed out to him the unreasonableness of the custom, but was told in reply that unless the Sirkar did something to stop this practice it could not be stopped. In other classes of Hindus people will take girls in marriage from, but will not give theirs to, certain sections of their own castes. The result of this is that weakening of the race which must follow the selection of husbands and wives being confined within a narrow circle. It is also the fruitful cause of large dowers being demanded by bridegrooms or fathers of bridegrooms from brides' fathers as amongst certain sections of Brahmirs, and of people becoming involved in debt or feeling otherwise miserable on account of having a daughter on hand. Therefore.

what with girls dying during their first confinement, so many girl widows leading a life of misery or shame or both, heavy expenses incidental to marriage, the birth of a daughter is looked upon as a sign of evil by every Hindu, and well may it be said in the proverb *chalna bhala na kos ka, beti bhal na ek, dena bhala na bap ka, jo sain rakhe tek*.—To have to make even one kos journey, to have even one daughter, to owe money even to one's father, is not good—may God save man from these evils.

How to put a stop to this practice is now the question. Associations for social reform have been tried with more or less success. But because the majority of the people of our parts have yet to learn the value of persistent corporate action, because our educated friends are not much in earnest about these matters, and because no efforts have yet been made by our reformers to get the masses to co-operate with them, they have not been so successful as was expected. A writer in a book called, "Reform and Progress in India" suggested the formation of a Central Association in London with branches and sub-branches in all principal towns of India, and with all principal Natives as active, and all principal Europeans as sympathizing or advising members. But when we have already an Association for social reform in India and in England, including amongst its members some of the highest Englishmen and Englishwomen, as well as a National Union in the latter country, including some of the very highest and best educated Natives, why multiply Associations and why not utilize either of these bodies for the purpose, divide its work into social and political, and leave it optional to people to join either or both? Anything emanating from such a body would represent the united voice of the country and would, therefore, carry more weight than stray representations by individuals; but the question remains, would the promoters of these institutions listen to the suggestion? Our impression, derived from a knowledge of our people, however, is that a vast majority of these require some pressure from without to put them in actual motion. Already the feeling against infant marriage in nearly every section of the Hindu community is pretty strong. But as said above, people are afraid to move or take the first step. Under such circumstances official sympathy and official co-operation would be, as it has already been wherever it was used, of great service. We would not even scru-

ple to demand legislation. Our Native friends might here stand up and say, what has the Government to do with our private concerns? And the cry is re-echoed by European officials of Government. But as pointed out above, the Native requires a little pressure from without to be roused to take active steps in the cause of reform. Without pressure he will not move, and this is not the feeling of the more thoughtful members of the educated classes only, but of others also who are waiting for something from outside to turn up to justify their acting up to their convictions. Talk to any Native of the old school in this respect, and his first answer will be that nothing could be done by the people and everything by the Government. The Sarkar is to him the embodiment of wisdom and power, and if the Sarkar moves he will move with it. A thousand agencies, religion, climate, habit, association, repressive influences of different foreign rules, have all more or less tended to destroy the Native's sense of individuality, and however glibly our patriots may talk, yet when the moment for action comes, they slip back or are often thrown in the shade by their less enlightened fellows. It is not at all, as is supposed, a matter of religious interference. Infant Marriage has no connection with religion in the sense this word ought to be properly understood. If it has any connection, it has with ceremonial custom which by long usage may be looked upon by some as having the force of religion, but which by as many more is repudiated without their being any the worse for it. If customs, which have come to be regarded as associated with religion, are always to be respected by Government with extreme scrupulousness, why was Sutti abolished? Why has obscene singing and insulting people in the streets on certain festivals been put a stop to? Why was the marriage of widows legalized? Why was a Hindu who had renounced the religion of his forefathers declared, contrary to the express injunctions of Hindu law, entitled to inherit his ancestral property, and why, of all others, was a Hindu widow guilty of unchastity held not to have forfeited her late husband's estate, though Hindu opinion, Hindu law and Hindu religion were all opposed to it? If humanity and the altered conditions of Native society dictated these laws and rulings, the same things necessitate the alteration of the present law of marriage, which is eating up the very vitals of the Hindu nation. Bentham's theory was that all legislation was an evil, and only warrantable when the legislator was

assured of the existence of an evil capable of correction and that his legislation would correct it. Now what has been said above is, I think, sufficient to prove that infant marriage is an evil. That it has no connection with religion is also clear, if not from anything else, from the fact that it is usually a luxury indulged in by the higher and more well-to-do classes. That the circumstances of the country require the law is proved from the fact that throughout the North West Provinces, wherever Mr. Malabari went in his recent tour, one of the resolutions was to invoke the aid of the legislature in putting a stop to infant marriage. That such aid would put a stop to it is proved from the fact that had persuasion or advice alone been resorted to in the matter of the abolition of Suttee or female infanticide, these practices would never have been so effectually put down. In addition to this be it said that it is not always that the Government legislates according to the public opinion of the country. On the contrary, it is notorious that many a law was framed, in the ultimately justified belief, that the people would adapt themselves to it, whilst, many a law, though proved to be quite unsuited to the wants of the people, still encumbers the statute-book.

With due deference to the recent Resolution of the Government of India on Mr. Malabari's first Note on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood, we cannot help feeling that it would be well for the party of reform to move the legislature by memorials largely and influentially signed, to enact a law declaring marriages contracted below a certain age, say 11 or 12 for girls and 12 or 13 for boys, illegal for purposes of inheritance, &c. Such a law would greatly promote the abolition of infant marriage. It would not be a harsh or cruel law, as the one proposed by Mr. Whitley Stokes who would make marriages contracted below these ages punishable with fine and imprisonment. It would be quite consonant to public feeling, which is already in favour of having marriages at these ages, and would greatly reduce the number of girl or virgin widows. In fact, it would not at all disturb Hindu society, for many sections of that community have already commenced to have marriages at these ages. The other remedies suggested by those who would have this practice abolished would also be feasible a few years hence, for if, as is proposed, we were to exclude married candidates from the University examinations we would be precluding a very large, if not all

the present, Hindu students from completing their education. In the same way we would be depriving Hindus of the few Government appointments held by them, were we to have unmarried candidates only or preferably for these appointments. On the contrary, if we have a rule excluding married candidates from the University examination, say 8 or 10 years hence, we would save the present generation and discourage infant marriage in future.

Unequal marriages are also very common in these provinces. Parents in needy circumstances often give their daughters in marriage for money to men who may be at the very brink of the grave. Here is a typical case taken from the Indian Law Reports of the Allahabad High Court for 1878. A father wishes to give his daughter in marriage to a decrepit old man for money. The people of the caste throw him out of caste and the girl's uncle applies for custody of the minor, so that he could give her in marriage to a proper person. The Court sympathizes with the poor girl and at heart condemns the father's action, but refuses to interfere because it says the Hindu law gives a father absolute power in the disposal of his daughter. Now here is a case for our lovers of humanity to legislate upon. They make the Civil Courts guardian of a minor's person and property. But why do they confine the guardianship to minors having property? Why do they not save hundreds of Hindu girls from being victims of their parents' cupidity or folly by being forced into marriage with persons utterly unfit to be their husbands? Religion and public opinion alike condemn this practice. Why does the legislature lag behind? Would it not be more proper to have a short Section added to the Minor's Act to the effect that if a girl's parents were about to marry her to a person say above 50, for money or otherwise, any person interested in her may have the marriage stopped by applying to the Civil Court, which may exercise its discretion according to circumstances?; whilst any money that may be thus received may also be declared recoverable at the girl's suit. Take another more recent instance which scandalized the Hindu society of Delhi the other day. A young girl of about 11, who was married to a highly respectable old man of about 55 or 60 years of age, was left a widow soon after her marriage. She was an heiress and was thus an object of pursuit to many an adventurer. At last she gave way to the temptation and eloped with a young man, openly abusing

her parents for having destroyed her future happiness. If these instances are not sufficient to move our legislature or the Government, it may well be doubted what else would, and well may we say to our European friends and sympathizers, "You have shown your sympathy towards us in this matter, and for this we are truly grateful. But your sympathy has been more a sympathy of words than action. If you take a real interest in the advancement of Hindus, if your taunt, that we should reform ourselves socially before clamouring for political privileges, is not a mere excuse for keeping us back from things we may justly claim to be entitled to, if after education you wish to do us the greatest service which rulers ever did to the ruled, then meet us half way, don't be nervous about interference, you have only to move in the matter, and there will be no opposition worth the name."

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## (2). ENFORCED WIDOWHOOD.

### *Prospects of remarriage of widows in the N. W. Provinces.*

The figures given in our paper on Infant Marriage have shown that a very large percentage of child and girl widows is due to early marriages. We may now add that for every 7 widows amongst Hindus between the ages of 1 and 19, there is only 1 amongst Mahomedans. Amongst Europeans, on the other hand, the proportion must be less, and whilst widows amongst Mahomedans and Christians are under no real or supposed religious prohibition from remarriage, those amongst Hindus are. The only possible solution of the difficulty is stoppage of early marriages. The British Government have legalized the remarriage of Hindu widows. They are, moreover, ready to let a widow who remarries retain her late husband's estate as well as her religion, even though she fails to obtain the consent of her caste-fellows to her remarriage. This is probably all they could do. But custom and priestly teaching have proved and will for some time to come prove more powerful than law. The Hindu Shastras, whilst enjoining due honor being paid to the female sex, also lay down a life of austerity and purity as the only means of salvation for a widow. Says Manu "Where women are respected, the family prospers." But "a woman must do nothing unkind to her lord, be he living or

dead. She must emaciate her body by living on roots and fruits, but she must not mention the name of another man. She must avoid all sensual gratifications and practise the incomparable rules of virtue followed by such women as are devoted to one husband. A virtuous wife who devotes herself to pious charity after the death of her husband ascends to heaven." These and other precepts, inculcated by our Shastras, constantly repeated by our religious teachers and implicitly believed in both by our men and women, have associated with the remarriage of a widow all the pains and penalties attaching to the worst form of religious sin. On the other hand no greater insult could be offered to a woman than to wish her to be a widow or to charge her with adultery. But it is only amongst tribes or castes having the pride of race or claiming religious or social superiority, that the prohibition of widow marriage is so strong. Thus amongst Brahmins, Kahatriyas (Rajputs) Banias, Kaiths and others whom the pride of wealth has raised in the social scale, the feeling against widow remarriage is as strong as ever. Amongst all the lower tribes of Sudras, Jats, Gujars, &c., widows remarry freely, often the late husband's brother, or if such a person is not available, any other person, in spite of the injunctions of the Shastras or the teaching of the priests. In Mairwara in Ajmere they have a custom of making a widow choose between a white and a red cloth, soon after her husband's death. If she chooses the former she means to remain a widow, if the latter, to remarry. Could not our more enlightened brethren take a leaf out of these simple people's book? But do the sufferers from this custom really require our aid? To answer this we must divide Hindu widows into two classes, viz, virgin widows and real widows. It may be cruelty to keep the former unmarried, and in their case the prohibition of remarriage will act most cruelly. Their number at the last census was some 26,000. But if we succeeded in raising the marriageable age of boys we would sensibly decrease it. In the other class there is often a positive disinclination to remarry, not only amongst Hindus but amongst classes which sanction remarriage. Amongst both classes of widows Nature, though kept down by custom and tradition, now and then breaks out and asserts herself, and we would not be quite beyond the mark in saying that not a few prostitutes in our large towns come from women who once



belonged to respectable families, whom custom kept back from remarrying and who broke through all restraints and brought dishonor upon themselves and their families. When one of these elopements occurs the Hindu society of the place is convulsed for the moment, but public conscience soon goes to sleep in the belief that it is useless to fight against fate. It must not, however, be supposed that these cases are common or universal. Sympathy, care, watchfulness and the tenderest desire to mitigate as far as possible the lot of the poor widow, combined with religious precepts and teaching, like those mentioned above, and the general seclusion of females, have all tended to keep Hindu widows purer than might have been otherwise expected. Many a widow proves "a perfect woman nobly plained"; she realizes the truth of the saying that present trials are but the seeds of future glories. Fasts, penances, religious and charitable duties, make up the sum total of her existence. In the coldest season of the year she would be going to the local river or tank for her morning ablutions. In the rains she would be abstaining from food on alternate days or give up such necessary articles of diet as salt, condiments, &c. She would often live upon only one meal a day or give up all cooked food and live up to Manu's texts on pure roots and fruits. Her relatives also, instead being cruel or unkind to her or anxious to get her property, would, if she is childless, often induce her to adopt a son to perpetuate her husband's family or raise a sum towards her maintenance. In some classes custom forces them to do so; whether she was rich or poor. As she gains experience she assumes the position of the family matron and her authority is supreme in all domestic matters. She is no more a household drudge than any other woman of the family, whose husband was alive, and her presence is not always unwelcome at family festivities. The same custom, therefore, which prohibited her remarriage, has also done all that it could to mitigate the hardship. But it is none the less necessary to modify it, in the interests of morality, if we could do so without violence to the people's instincts in this direction. The attempt would surely be worth making. Mr. Justice West suggests that excommunication or threat of divine displeasure for being party to or assisting the remarriage of a widow, be made punishable by law. Such a measure is even more drastic than what the Government consent to legislate upon on the

motion of an important section of the Hindu community; and though it might operate as a powerful check on caste or priestly combinations against widow marriage, yet the feeling against the latter being still very strong, it is doubtful if even the more advanced sections of the community would apply for it. Outside legal circles the widow marriage Act is known to but few persons here, and many an old Banya would look aghast at being told that the British Government had long ago legalized the remarriage of widows. Well might he exclaim that Kali yug had come! Our Marriage Associations, both in the Punjab and elsewhere, are not very successful because of this disinclination of the general community to patronize them, and even those who join or sympathize with them sometimes fail to have the courage of their convictions and are thus no better than their less educated brethren. Thus what Mill says of England applies with much greater force to our society. "In our times from the highest class of society down to the lowest everyone lives under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. Not only in what concerns others but in what concerns themselves, the individual or the family do not ask themselves what do I prefer or what would suit my character or disposition, or what would allow the highest and the best in me to have fair play and enable it to grow and thrive? They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position, what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances, or worse still what is usually done by persons of a station and circumstances superior to mine? It does not occur to them to have any inclination except for what is customary. Thus the mind itself is bowed to the yoke. Even in what people do for pleasure conformity is the first thing thought of; they like in crowds, they exercise choice only in things commonly done; peculiarity of taste, eccentricity of conduct are shunned equally with crimes; until by dint of not following their nature, they have no nature to follow, their human capacities are withered and starved, they become incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures and are generally without either opinions or feelings of home growth or properly their own." This is more true of the North-West Provinces because there exclusion from caste means social death—a severance of all ties of kinship and friendship—of all that is near and dear to the man; and few people have the courage to incur the risk. No reforms.

however necessary, could therefore be successfully attempted here till the great majority of the leading castes were prepared for it. One solution of the difficulty would seem to be in greater attention being paid both by the Government and the leaders of Native society towards the female education. What has hitherto been done is infinitesimally small as compared with what remains to be done. The Government seem to think that unless the Natives lend their co-operation and full assent to the measures they may propose, no permanent or satisfactory progress could be hoped for. Says the Government of the North-West Provinces in its letter on the recommendations of the Education Commission, "The recommendations of the Commission for the furtherance of female education may be accepted in their entirety as laying down temperately and judiciously the lines on which further action in this difficult and important matter should proceed. Sir Alfred Lyall concurs in the remark of the Commission, that in the existing circumstances of the women of India, the mere establishment of schools will be by no means sufficient to bring about the general spread of education amongst them, that is to say that in their case, public instruction which can exist only by the establishment of public institutions is in itself of but little use. Female education is, of all branches of the subject, that to which public instruction is least applicable, it is that in which the difficulties are the greatest and the results hardest to verify. Before any considerable progress can be attained, the natives must themselves lend their co-operation and full assent to the administrative measures, and a public opinion less indifferent to the education of females must be formed. For much of the work that has been done in the past, the country is indebted to the personal exertions or to the influence and encouragement of non-official Europeans, and for some time to come no great assistance could be hoped for from any other source. But the subject will be commended to the attention of District and Municipal Boards and the investigations of the Commission will be of much use in deciding on the manner in which official encouragement can best be given." How backward female education is in the North-West Provinces will be seen from the following extract from

a speech which the writer made at the Agra Town Hall in connection with the Countess of Dufferin's Fund :—

Lady Dufferin has gone much further and therefore so much greater was the obligation which she had laid India under. But in order to crown her efforts with success it will be necessary that all medical aid provided to Indian women be consistent with their prejudices, and that as much as possible native, instead of foreign, agency be employed. For this purpose it will be necessary as much, if not more, for the natives than for the promoters of the fund to direct special efforts towards the general education of Indian women. What has hitherto been done has resulted in nothing, for the efforts were mostly spasmodic. The statistics showed that out of 1 crore and 84 lakhs of females above the age of 5 years in the N. W. Provinces and Oudh only 21,000 were able to read and write, and of these only some 10,000 were scholars, i. e. 17 in every 10,000. The backwardness of female education was most strikingly apparent amongst Hindus, who in a female population of 1 crore and 58 lakhs could only boast of 10,000 girls able to read and write and of these only 3,000 were scholars. Amongst Mahomedans the number was 3,500 literates and 2,500 scholars in a population of 25 lakhs, whilst amongst Christians literates were 50 per cent and scholars 28 per cent. The statistics also showed that only 83 out of every 10,000 women were employed in literary profession, and the Munsiff inquired of his audience if they were satisfied with this state of things. Improved medical aid, though very good in itself, could only be sought after if it was valued, and it would not be valued till we gave our females the wherewithal to value it. For why did we males prefer English doctors and English medicine to Native Hakims and Baidis and Native medicine? Simply because of our progress in education and civilization, and because these have taught us that whilst Native medical science had remained at a standstill, European science was keeping itself abreast of the times. Let the people, therefore, make persistent efforts in the cause of female education and the Government would meet them half way. The latter were quite justified in saying that unless Natives gave up some of their apathy they could not do much in this respect; for any system of public instruction that was suited for boys could not be adopted for girls. Turning, again, to the condition of Native females it was pointed out by the speaker that between the ages of 1 and 30 there were about 3 lakhs of widows and as many widowers in the North West Provinces, and whilst in England not one in a hundred boys and only 3 in a hundred girls married before 15, in the North West Provinces the numbers were 47 per cent for boys and 90 per cent for girls. It was also found that unlike England few women in India bore children after 40, and the speaker asked to what was all this due. Was it not due to Infant Marriage, seclusion of females, want of proper medical treatment during sickness, and inability of females to bear the strain of first confinement and of males

that of mental labour coupled with bodily weakness? He, therefore, exhorted the proposed Committee to work honestly and diligently and they would succeed (Loud cheers).

What little success has been achieved in this direction is due mostly to the self-denying efforts of the ladies of various Zenana Missions who, in spite of the professed religious character of their teaching, count their pupils by hundreds. There are but few public schools supported by the Government or the Municipalities, and the impetus which the exertions of Sir William Muir gave to female education appears to have died from want of public support. But in spite of these drawbacks there is already in the minds of the upper and middle class of Natives a strong desire for female education, and in some places Native members of Municipal or District Boards get wives of village schoolmasters to open female schools, which are often largely attended. What is, however, required is the extension of female schools for all classes of girls in convenient centres of each town as well as a system of Zenana teaching from house to house for such students as could pay for it. The difficulty that will be felt at the outset in having competent teachers would be gradually removed as students of the less well-to-do classes come out to serve as teachers, and there could be little doubt of the system finding favour and encouragement from the Native community. A portion of the Countess of Dufferin's fund applied towards the general education of Native females would soon afford a supply of female students of the more respectable classes now so badly wanted for medical schools, whilst it would afford great impetus towards the cause of female education and as a consequence pave the way towards social reform, remove and tend towards the removal of those prejudices which are still cherished amongst many a Native household towards availing of the services of trained doctors and midwives. Another great step towards reform would be freer intercourse between Native and European ladies. The pardah system on the part of the former and the reserve and fear that their visits might be unwelcome on the part of the latter, keeps social intercourse between the two classes in a very undesirable state. Let us, however, assure those of the philanthropic ladies who are anxious to mix with their less educated Indian sisters that their 'visits' are no longer unwelcome, that they are looked upon as a source of

honour and that it is only necessary for them to take the initiative in this respect, as they have done in many others under other circumstances, and they would soon introduce a radical change in Native society. A writer on Reform and Progress in India has put the matter so pointedly that we could not resist the temptation of quoting him *in extenso*. "Here is indeed a promising field for labour on the part of any ladies who could devote time and money to the good of their darkskinned sisters. And O women of England in India, if, instead of wasting your time in frivolity or worse at Hill stations, and bringing discredit upon your nation and your sex in the eyes of India's watching millions, you were to devote a portion of it to learning the vernaculars of the country and preparing for such work as may fall in your way in the harem, you might then stimulate the men — who will be very much what you make them — to rise to a more just appreciation of their duty. But if you both continue looking on India as a mere place to make money in to spend in England; with all your hopes, fears, and affections finding their shortest way thither by the overland route; returning after twenty years' residence with no more knowledge of the country, of its needs and aspirations, of its people and their inner life, than the Captain of the P. and O. Steamer who takes you home can pick up from a few days' occasional stay in Bombay or Calcutta; then, sooner or later, a retribution must overtake our country, for neglected opportunities and duty undone towards this vast aggregation of human beings whose destinies Providence has placed under our control.

It is a matter of congratulation that the claims of India on England have a good chance now of being more effectually recognised, and (in regard to the subject we are considering at the moment) that the cry of the women of India is beginning to reach the ears of those noble workers in the cause of their sex by whose labours the metropolis of the world is blest. For they do cry to us — those ignorant wives and helpless children; those baby-widows doomed to life-long misery and an existence the only solace of which can be found in crime or suicide.

The young children, oh my brothers,  
 They are weeping bitterly;  
 They are weeping in the play-time of others  
 In the country of the free

Oh for the presence of more of England's noblest daughters, the labourers in the cause of humanity; that by the contrast of the purity, the heroism, and self-sacrifice of their lives, the reproach might be removed from English womanhood brought on it by the thoughtless butterflies of society, whose frivolity too often tends to gravitate into vice: that when we attempt to argue against the seclusion of females we may not be met by covert allusion to the scandals of English social life, and find ourselves at a loss for a rejoinder." It is necessary to press both these points upon public attention, for the priest and his superstitious teachings have still the strongest hold upon the minds of our women, and no reform could be possible till such superstitions were removed; nor would any law, however well devised, be likely to be availed of by those for whom it is intended till they were aware of its existence. Much has been said about making excommunication penal. But the law could only touch external acts and could not affect a society which has no one priestly head and which, in case the law is passed, whilst taking good care not to come into its meshes, would do all it could to make the social life of its victim a burden. On the other hand there are no Theistic Societies in the N. W. P. which the reformer, man or woman, could join, nor is the number of reformers yet so large as to be able to form a community of itself, supposing such a result to be desirable. Beyond merely feeling the necessity of some reform in this direction, the educated classes have, therefore, yet been able to do nothing to make the more conservative section of the priesthood or the laity give way to them or lose their hold upon them. On the contrary, the reformer has often to give way and his ranks have not as yet come to include any considerable or influential section of the Brahmin community. Local organisations, headed by a central organisation, might be of use in educating the masses on the necessity and desirability of reform, but pending such education their protection against caste oppression will not be of much avail. The Hindu practice has been for centuries opposed to widow marriage, and under the peculiar circumstances of our society it could not be forcibly abolished. Till, therefore, the female intellect is brought on a footing of equality with the male, the cause of reform would always meet with hinderances which would discourage the most ardent reformer. Without intellectual advancement of the women proceeding *pari*

*passu* with that of men much of our labour in invoking the Government for legislation in favour of giving widows greater rights than they possess or freeing them from caste persecution would be well nigh useless. But there are one or two points in which the Government may rightly be expected to assist the Native community. The first is to make the seducer of a widow punishable in the same way as the seducer of a married woman. To a Hindu the loss of his widowed daughter or daughter-in-law's honour is as painful as that of his wife; and a young, inexperienced Hindu widow goes wrong often from importunity and the arts of the wicked and the profligate than from choice, and the fact that the offender knows he could escape scotfree makes him the more dangerous to any respectable Hindu family. The condition of other societies supplies no analogy, as there infant or child marriage is not often the rule. On the other hand the laws of Native States, like Indore, make such offences legally punishable. Could not the British legislature do the same on the prosecution of the widows' guardians?

Another reform which would be much welcomed by Hindu society is the abrogation of the Privy Council's ruling, which declares a Hindu widow guilty of subsequent unchastity entitled to retain the estate that had once vested in her. This ruling is not only opposed to the spirit of the Hindu law which enjoins a life of chastity for a Hindu widow who succeeds to her husband's estate, but to the feelings of nearly the whole of the Hindu community. In the Courts it is invoked only by the adherents of the profligate or the unchaste widow. It does not assist the cause of female emancipation unless the latter is confounded with unchaste conduct. On the contrary it places a widow who keeps half a dozen paramours in a much better position than one who takes the more honourable course of remarrying. The framers of the Hindu law never contemplated it as the nineteenth century interpretation of their teaching, and it is well for Hindu society that it is not at all widely known amongst those likely to profit by it.

Other forms of relief might also suggest themselves to those who are or may be inclined to assist the needy or the helpless. In every large town the number of genteel poor widows, who are too proud to beg and who would rather die than lead a life of public beggary, is not small or inconsiderable. In some places private



charity relieves their suffering, in others they are exposed to all the miseries of starvation. Having no honourable means of earning a livelihood they live upon either manual labour or incur the risk of going astray. For such in the interests of public morality and charity something seems necessary to be done. We might beg to suggest two remedies. (1) For that large class of its Native servants who get poor pay and often die leaving their families unprovided for, let the Government either have a system of State insurance or a family pension fund, just as it has for its civilians and military officers, and compel every one to subscribe to it. The present institutions which admit Uncovenanted people as subscribers are very limited in their operation, the Hindu Family Pension fund being confined to Bengalees and the uncovenanted Service fund to Christians only; whilst the Post Office only ensures the lives of its own employees. An extension of the latter to all Government servants would save many a Native family from misery after the person who earned for it was dead.

For others it may be well for the promoters of the Countess of Dufferin's fund to consider if a portion of it could not be applied towards the relief of those Native widows who had been left unprovided for, either in giving them education so as to open a means of earning honourable livelihood, or in relieving them through local committees organized for the purpose. This would be very popular with the Natives and might stimulate them to subscribe to the fund more largely.



